

Slips of the Tongue in the Speech Ethics of Ben Sira

In characterizing the speech ethics of the Hebrew Bible and more specifically the wisdom literature, there is much that is unsurprising. The biblical authors unanimously commend honesty, self-control, and keeping promises. Conversely, they roundly condemn actions such as lying, gossip, slander, cursing, mockery, and perjury. No ancient sage would disagree with this counsel, and yet the recurring presence of such admonitions from Mesopotamian to Greco-Roman sources simply highlights how prevalent and attractive various speech sins are to humans, regardless of cultural context or social location. Such prevalence might indicate that there is a widespread consensus that humans have a proclivity towards improper speech that takes effort and wisdom to avoid. However, against the background of Proverbs, it is remarkable that Ben Sira speaks on several occasions of “a slip of the tongue”, which appears to represent a new element in Jewish sapiential speech ethics. Before examining the references to this phenomenon in Ben Sira, the teaching of Proverbs needs to be considered briefly.

I. The Ability to Control the Tongue in Proverbs

In Proverbs, the standard positions concerning proper and improper speech can be found throughout the book, but what is interesting is the way that these positions are coordinated with descriptions of the wise and the foolish and the anthropological presuppositions involved in such statements. The first thing to note about the understanding of the “tongue” in Proverbs is that the sages have a sober recognition of the enormous power of the tongue for either good or ill ¹.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruit. (18,21)

By the blessing of the upright a city is lifted up,
but by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down. (11,11)

¹ All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

Because of the weighty consequences that can follow from speech, the sages in Proverbs consistently urge the need for care and restraint in speaking. For example:

He who keeps watch over his mouth and tongue
keeps himself out of trouble. (21,23)

He who guards his mouth preserves his life;
he who opens wide his lips, ruin is his. (13,3)

The proverb preserved in 13,3 is particularly poignant since it portrays the ability to restrain one's speech as a matter of life and death. Throughout Proverbs there is a consistent correlation between restrained speech and wisdom, on the one hand, and unrestrained speech and folly, on the other. The nature of the contrast in chapters 15 and 10 is significant:

The tongue of the wise makes knowledge pleasant,
but the mouth of fools pours out folly. (15,2)

The mind of the righteous considers how to answer,
but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil. (15,28)

The mouth of the righteous is a spring of life,
but the mouth of the wicked masks violence. (10,11)

With many words, transgression does not cease,
but the sage restrains his lips. (10,19)

The mouth of the righteous bears the fruit of wisdom,
but the tongue of the perverse will be cut off. (10,31)

While the basic contrast in these verses is not particularly surprising, the language used by the sages is revealing, for it suggests that one's speech is simply a reflection of one's inner disposition. Fools *pour out* folly whereas the mouth of the righteous is like a geyser of life, *gushing out* wisdom. As William Baker observes, "The mouth of the fool cannot help but gush folly. The opposite is true of the righteous man who cannot help but spout wisdom" ².

² W.R. BAKER, *Personal Speech-Ethics in the Epistle of James* (WUNT II/68; Tübingen 1995) 109, n. 13.

Thus, in one sense the use of one's tongue is somewhat beyond one's control; one cannot help but to speak in ways that are consistent with one's character ³. Yet, in another sense the sages seem to assume that the mastery of speech correlates with the cultivation of wisdom. For this reason, a loss of control of the tongue and becoming ensnared by one's speech is connected to wickedness and foolishness and is the result of prior folly:

In the transgression of the lips is an evil snare,
but the righteous escape from trouble. (12,13)

The mouth of the fool is his ruin;
his lips are a snare to his life. (18,7)

There is babbling which is like sword thrusts,
but the tongue of the wise is medicinal. (12,18)

It is a snare for one to say rashly, "holy",
and after making a vow to think about it. (20,25)

Do you see someone who is hasty in his words?
There is more hope for a fool than for him. (29,20)

This brief overview of Proverbs reveals the following picture. First, while it is certainly true that there is a general anxiety over the destructive power of the tongue, the consistent correlation between wisdom/folly and restrained/unrestrained speech suggests that for these sages the tongue is understood as a basically neutral window into the state of someone's character. If humans show a proclivity towards evil speech it is due to the pervasiveness of sin, but this can be corrected by growth in wisdom and righteousness. Second, and related, rashness of speech and becoming trapped in one's words are understood as consequences of foolishness, but there is little indication in Proverbs that the wise are also apt to lose control of their tongues and say things that are unintended and

³ Note the similarity to Jesus' statement that the mouth is a neutral conduit for a person's nature: "But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander." (Matt 15,18-19; cf. Luke 6,45).

regrettable ⁴. If anything, the wise cannot help but speak wisely and judiciously.

II. The Ability to Control the Tongue in Ben Sira

When turning to the Wisdom of Ben Sira, written at least a century after the book of Proverbs, many of the same concerns regarding the control of the tongue are present ⁵. To a large degree Ben Sira is in continuity with Proverbs, evidenced through a sustained concern to be circumspect in speaking. Realizing that a person's tongue can be his downfall (5,13), he contrasts the carelessness of babblers with the reserved caution of the prudent (21,25) and explicitly commands his students to guard what comes out of their mouths:

Do not be a hypocrite before others,
and guard your lips. (1,29)

Be concise; say much in few words;
be as one who is knowledgeable, yet can be silent. (32,8)

This is unsurprising and standard advice, found in both Proverbs and non-biblical texts throughout the ancient world (e.g. Ahiqar *Sayings*, 14-16; *Inst. Ankh.* 15,16; Isocrates *To Dem.* 41). Yet, in comparison to Proverbs a new element emerges in that Ben Sira

⁴ I do think it is unlikely that the sages had a "black and white" view of the world. Surely people fall on a spectrum between absolute wisdom and absolute folly such that in "real life" there is a mixture of uses of the tongue for any one person. I am simply highlighting that this gray area, where slips of the tongue happen, is not addressed by Proverbs since the book basically parses out speech ethics into the categories of wise and foolish.

⁵ By its very nature, the book of Proverbs is difficult to date, though it is evident from internal evidence that the individual sayings reflect a wide swath of cultural and social concerns. The date for the completion of the book is often placed in the Persian period, though Fox has pointed out that an early Hellenistic dating is quite possible. In any case, the final form of the book must have been settled well before Ben Sira which is unanimously dated to the first quarter of the second century BCE. See M.V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB 18A; New Haven, CT 2000) 6, 48-49. For a helpful discussion of the *status quaestionis* see K. DELL, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge 2006).

warns of “slips” of the tongue several times, though here caution is important because among the places where this idea occurs, only two are extant in the Hebrew. In order to see why caution is necessary, consider Sir 14,1a which reads in the Hebrew version:

How fortunate is the one whose mouth does not grieve him
(אשרי אנוש לא עצבו פיהו).

The Syriac is close to the Hebrew and is concerned only with regret over something said, but the Greek reads a little differently:

How fortunate is the person who does not slip by his mouth
(μακάριος ἀνὴρ, ὃς οὐκ ὠλίσθησεν ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ).

While the Hebrew and Syriac view as fortunate the person who has no regrets, the Greek translates עצב with ὀλισθάνω (“to slip”). This translation incorporates the connotation of something said accidentally or unintentionally. Given that the Hebrew does contain the elements of being fortunate or blessed (אשרי) and of grieving, it is understandable that the Greek would interpret the dimension of regret as the result of a slip of the tongue. Yet, importantly, in the Hebrew and Syriac the idea of slipping is not explicitly present, and it is possible to regret something later that was said quite intentionally at the time. A similar textual pattern can be seen in Sir 21,7, which is not extant in the Hebrew. The Greek translation reads (woodenly): “The powerful in tongue is known from afar; and/but the thoughtful person recognizes his slipping”⁶. Once again, the Syriac contains no reference to the idea of slipping, which raises the possibility that this concept was absent from Ben Sira’s Hebrew⁷.

⁶ The second line is ambiguous. It could be that the thoughtful person recognizes when the powerful in speech has slipped, or it could be that in contrast to the powerful speaker the truly thoughtful person recognizes when he himself has slipped. The latter seems more likely; so also P.W. SKEHAN – A.A. DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York 1987) 309; R. BULLARD – H. HATTON, *A Handbook on Sirach* (UBSHS; New York 2008) 425.

⁷ The Greek is followed by J. MARBÖCK, *Jesus Sirach 1-23* (HThKAT; Freiburg 2010) 249; SKEHAN – DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 304; and others. The Syriac is followed by G.H. BOX – W.O.E. OESTERLEY, “The Book of Sirach”, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (ed. R.H. CHARLES) (Oxford 1913) I:388.

These verses should alert us to the possibility that the idea of a slip of the tongue may have been more a concern for Ben Sira's grandson than for Ben Sira himself⁸. While these examples should encourage due caution about references to a slip of the tongue in passages where no Hebrew is extant, there are passages in which a good case can be made that Ben Sira refers to the phenomenon of a slip of the tongue. For example, in a series of אֲשֶׁר־ statements Ben Sira says in 25,8:

How fortunate is the one who does not fall (נָפַל) by the tongue
and the one who is not a servant to one beneath him.

Here Ben Sira refers to someone who “falls” by means of the tongue. In his study of the motif of “falling” in Ben Sira, Antonino Minissale concludes that when used in the context of speech “in all cases the ‘falling’ regards the action of the wrong use of the tongue, not its consequence”⁹. In other words, “fall” signifies a kind of speech error, not a result of a speech error. Minissale's interpretation finds support in the parallel line. Just as it is improper for a person to serve someone of lower social status, so a person should be in control of his tongue and not the other way around. Thus, it is likely that the operative idea behind the word “fall” in v. 8a is a person's loss of control regarding his speech. From this angle, the translation of “fall” with ὀλισθάνω, “slip”, is reasonable even if slightly different lexically.

While Proverbs has many statements regarding people who are trapped or ensnared by their tongues, there are no descriptions of speech mistakes as stumbling, slipping, or falling. However, in both Proverbs and Psalms there are many statements that use the image of stumbling, tripping, or slipping feet to describe more general actions and choices along the “path” of life (e.g. Prov 3,23; 4,12; Pss 17,5; 73,2), including in relation to obedience to God's commands (Pss 37,31; 119,165). The same use of this metaphor is present in Sirach (9,5; 15,12; 31,7; 32,15.20; 34,19) and is even juxtaposed

⁸ Cf. A. MINISALE, *La versione greca del Siracide* (AnBib 133; Rome 1995) 238, n. 134.

⁹ I find Minissale persuasive in general, though I think 5,13 may be an exception to this characterization. A. MINISALE, “The metaphor of ‘falling’: Hermeneutic key to the Book of Sirach”, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira. Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology* (eds. A. PASSARO – G. BELLIA) (DCLS 1; Berlin 2008) 256.

with public speaking in 13,21-23¹⁰. Ben Sira's characterization of some speech errors as falls, stumbles, or slips is, then, a natural extension of this motif. In addition, this metaphor for speech errors comports well with Ben Sira's anthropology. While it is true that Ben Sira affirms "free will" and views human moral choices in essentially voluntaristic terms¹¹, there is also a certain ambivalence, even nervousness on his part that inclinations to sin tend to gain momentum until the sinner has lost control to make good choices. Nowhere is this ambivalence clearer than in the subject of speech ethics¹². Not only does Ben Sira portray the tongue as something constantly threatening to break loose and wreak havoc, but several of his major discussions of speech ethics (5,9 – 6,1; 19,4-17; 23,7-15) are juxtaposed with discussions of out-of-control passion (6,2-4; 18,30 – 19,3; 22,27 – 23,6), which suggests that the two are connected in his thought. Thus, like Proverbs, Ben Sira views speech as an indicator of someone's character, but the particular configuration of his views of anthropology and the nature of sin result in a view of speech that includes a view of the tongue as being prone to slip out of control. Among the additional passages where the context and the evidence of the versions strongly suggest that the idea of a slip of the tongue can be attributed to Ben Sira rather than being only a conceptual gloss by his grandson, the clearest case shows just this kind of extension in the concept of "slipping".

1. *A Slip of the Tongue as a Poorly Timed Statement (Sir 20,18)*

After a pericope on the proper timing of a reproof and of silence (20,1-8), Ben Sira records a series of paradoxes in 20,9-17. Then in vv. 18-20 he returns to the subject of speech ethics. He observes:

As water poured out on a stone rock,
so is the tongue of the wicked among the righteous.

¹⁰ On this passage see J. CORLEY, *Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship* (BJS 316; Providence, RI 2002) 119-53.

¹¹ J. HADOT, *Penchant mauvais et volonté libre dans la sagesse de Ben Sira* (Bruxelles 1970) 153-76, 193-206.

¹² G. BOCCACCINI, *Middle Judaism. Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis, MN 1991) 99-104.

As a fatty tail without salt, so is a word without timing;
 in the mouth of the undisciplined it remains.
 From the mouth of a fool a proverb is rejected
 for he does not speak it at its proper time. (20,18-20)

This translation follows the Syriac version, with the exception of v. 19b which is missing from the Syriac and has been supplied from the Greek¹³. The first line draws an image from the natural world, a common technique for Ben Sira, to extend the idea of slipperiness to the manner of speech of the wicked. The Greek makes this element of slipperiness more explicit: “A slip (ὀλίσθημα) on the ground is better than that of the tongue; so the fall of the wicked shall come just as swiftly”. Commentators since (at least) Fritzsche have noted that the Greek form of v. 18a bears a striking resemblance to a saying by the Stoic Zeno¹⁴. Even though most commentators follow the Greek for v. 18a, the obliqueness of the Syriac’s natural imagery suggests that it is likely to be original and that the Greek has clarified the image by conforming the verse to a well-known Greek proverb¹⁵. C. Spicq notes that the same saying has been attributed to Socrates and to Solon¹⁶. In addition, the Demotic text *Instruction of Ankhsheshonq* records a similar saying: “You may trip over your foot in the house of a great man; you should not trip over your tongue” (10,7)¹⁷.

¹³ The Syriac of v. 19a appears to have been expanded in connection with the loss of v. 19b; a plausible reconstruction is: אֱלִיָּה בִלָּא מְלַח מְלַח בִּלְאָ עַת. So M.Z. SEGAL, ספר בן־סירה השלם (Jerusalem 1997) 121. In its favor, this reconstruction reflects beautiful symmetrical assonance and can better account for a corruption on the part of the Greek (which reflects its own use of assonance: ἄχαρις - ἄκαιρος). Because of the brevity of this reconstruction, those who follow it usually retain the Greek version of the second line.

¹⁴ O. FRITZSCHE, *Die Weisheit Jesus Sirach's erklärt und übersetzt* (Leipzig 1859) 101. Interestingly, according to Diogenes Laertius, Zeno appealed to this proverbial saying in order to explain why he was so carefree at drinking parties. The playfully counterintuitive use of the saying by Zeno and the presence of similar sentiments elsewhere indicate that the proverb was not unique to Zeno.

¹⁵ I owe this argument to Jeremy Corley, who suggested it to me in private conversation.

¹⁶ C. SPICQ, “L’Ecclesiastique”, *La Sainte Bible* 6 (ed. L. PIROT – A. CLAMER) (Paris 1951) 667.

¹⁷ Translation from M. LICHTHEIM, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Berkeley, CA 1973-1980) III:167, 177. Also note a similar line from *Instruction of*

Thus, the concept of a “slip” of the tongue is likely original to Ben Sira but has been glossed by the grandson in the Greek version. In the Syriac version of v. 18, taken as original here, the idea of slipperiness is associated with the speech behavior of the wicked, since the image of water gliding off a rock describes the nature of their speech in the presence of the righteous. This shows conceptual consistency with Proverbs, where careless speech is coordinated with foolishness (12,13; 29,20; cf. Qoh 5,2). The context suggests that the issue is poor timing¹⁸. The words themselves may not be culpable, but the timing makes them like a fatty tail without salt. According to the commonly emended text of 1 Sam 9,24 the fatty tail was considered a delicacy¹⁹, but its inherent value is marred when not seasoned properly with salt (cf. Job 6,6). So, Ben Sira says, is the word offered at the wrong time. The same basic concept is reiterated in v. 20, in which Ben Sira notes that a proverbial saying (probably having some inherent value since it had become proverbial) is simply rejected when not well timed (also note earlier statements in vv. 1-8).

However, in the Greek version of v. 18 the image is slightly different. Here slipping on the ground is not connected directly with the speech of the wicked, but is compared to a slip of the tongue, where the latter element has been made explicit in the Greek. The basic idea, obviously, is that a momentary physical injury is far preferable to the kinds of damage that can result from a slip of the tongue. Yet, in adapting v. 18a to a popular Greek proverb its original connection with 18b was obscured and so seems to have prompted the grandson to make a necessary adjustment, which does not wholly relieve the awkwardness of their relationship. The point of comparison is shifted from the tongue of the wicked to the downfall of the wicked, namely the swiftness of such a fall. Therefore, in the Greek version of 20,18 the primary point of the “slipping” imagery is its unexpected and sudden nature. This makes it difficult

Anksheshong: “A slip of the tongue in the royal palace is a slip of the helm at sea” (23,10). Earlier commentators frequently cite a reference in Ahiqar, but it is found only in the Syriac, Ethiopic, and Slavonic versions. The Ethiopic (line 13) is almost exactly the same as Sir 20,18a, but the version in the Syriac (ii 23) has “better to stumble in the heart than with the tongue”, which reflects a different concept despite the formal similarity.

¹⁸ So MARBÖCK, *Sirach* 1-23, 245.

¹⁹ See P.K. McCARTER, *I Samuel* (AB 8; New York 1980) 170.

to deduce anything firm about the culpability of the person who makes the slip. While the speech error of a wicked person may still be the primary referent in view, the structure of the Greek makes the phenomenon of a slip in general, regardless of who makes it, an appropriate illustration for the downfall of the wicked.

It can be concluded that in 20,18-20 Ben Sira appears to have adopted the traditional sapiential correlation between speech errors and the wicked and expressed it in relation to the concept of a slippery tongue. The Greek has then adapted the saying to a well-known proverb in the Hellenistic world and in so doing introduced new comparative relationships into the verse. While the wicked may be especially prone to downfall through a slip of the tongue, the slip itself functions more paradigmatically.

2. *A Slip of the Tongue as a Common Human Error (Sir 19,13-17)*

Another occurrence of the idea of a slip of the tongue is found in the previous chapter. In the course of a discussion on gossip Ben Sira strongly urges his students not to repeat anything they have heard; instead they are to let it die with them (19,7-11). Instead of speaking to others about such information, the student should approach the subject of such gossip directly. Ben Sira counsels:

Reprove a friend; perhaps he did not do it ²⁰
 and if he did, lest he continue.
 Reprove a neighbor; perhaps he did not say it
 and if he did say it, that he might not repeat it.
 Reprove a friend; for often slander occurs
 and do not believe every word.
 Someone can slip, though unintentionally.
 Who has not sinned ²¹ with his tongue?
 Reprove your neighbor before becoming angry
 and give place to the Law of the Most High. (19,13-17)

²⁰ So the Greek: μήποτε οὐκ ἐποίησεν. The Syriac has "lest he do something wrong." The Greek is also favored by R. SMEND, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt* (Berlin 1906) 176. Similarly for two lines below.

²¹ The two verbs in this verse are reversed in the Syriac. For "slip" the Syriac has "stumble".

This pericope on reproof is frequently understood as an adaptation of Lev 19,17, which also follows a warning against gossip/slander and says, “You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself” (NRSV) ²². The overall situation in vv. 13-17 concerns an array of possible scenarios, all of which take as their point of departure the circulation of rumors. Ben Sira discusses a situation in which he has heard something about a friend or neighbor and points out that this person may or may not have done it; in addition, even if he did, he may have done it unintentionally. Given these varied possibilities, Ben Sira strongly advises avoiding entanglement in such gossip; instead, the matter should be taken up directly with the person at the center of such rumors.

In order to outline the possibilities of the situation, vv. 13-17 are structured with a four-fold repetition of the command “reprove” and the alternating objects of “friend” (vv. 13, 15) and “neighbor” (vv. 14, 17). These four verses are guided by the goal of discovering whether or not the companion did what he is alleged to have done. Yet, the disruption of the pattern in v. 16 serves to focus attention on this bicolon ²³. Jeremy Corley notes that by beginning v. 16 with the phrase “there is [someone]” Ben Sira employs a manner of speaking commonly used in sapiential literature for a “general observation of the world and human behavior” ²⁴. This universal phenomenon is described as a “slip” (the Greek again has ὀλισθαίνω; the Syriac has “stumble”), which in light of the next line must be a slip of the tongue. Furthermore, Ben Sira clarifies that this “slip” is unintentional (idiomatic for οὐκ ἄπο ψυχῆς; similarly Syriac; cf. the similar idiom in Lam 3,33).

Because v. 16 follows v. 15, it is possible that the slip refers to something slanderous that has slipped out about the friend or neighbor, i.e. the slander constitutes the slip. However, the appeal to empathy in the following line would then be difficult to explain. Instead

²² See CORLEY, *Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship*, 172; J. KUGEL, “On Hidden Hatred and Open Reproach: Early Exegesis of Leviticus 19:17”, *HTR* 80 (1987) 47-49.

²³ J. CRENSHAW, “The Book of Sirach”, *The New Interpreter's Bible* (ed. L.E. KECK) (Nashville, TN 1997) V, 736.

²⁴ CORLEY, *Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship*, 168.

a statement like “for slanderous statements are made carelessly all the time” would be expected. Rather, the empathy reflected in the rhetorical question in the second line suggests that the slip of the tongue is related to something the person in question has said, as described in v. 14. In other words, v. 16 seems to be asserting that even if the other person said something wrong, there may be mitigating circumstances: he may have said it unintentionally, in which case Ben Sira counsels empathetic compassion: “Who has not sinned with his tongue?” The obvious answer to this rhetorical question is “no one”.

From the rhetorical progression in this pericope, we can make three observations about Ben Sira’s idea of a slip of the tongue. First, the slip described here is unintentional; it is, literally, “not from his heart”²⁵. It is precisely the potentially unintentional nature of it, coupled with the appeal to common experience, which is the motivation for empathy towards such a person. Second, and related, this kind of slip is understood by Ben Sira to be universal. The rhetorical question in v. 16b points to the fact that everyone, wise as well as foolish, has made slips of this nature. Third, how one understands the moral evaluation of the slip is contingent upon the force of the rhetorical question in v. 16b. Is it conceptually parallel and thus identifying the slip as something sinful that was said? Or is Ben Sira arguing along the lines of a *qal wahomer*, appealing to the fact that everyone has sinned with the tongue and therefore should be compassionate towards a non-sinful error, a slip of the tongue? While the qualifier “though unintentional” might be taken to suggest the latter, Ben Sira elsewhere portrays slips of the tongue as culpable, at least insofar as they are indicative of a lack of discipline. The unintentional aspect is actually part of what makes slips of speech culpable. In addition, the fact that such a slip of the tongue has initiated the need for reproof suggests that the former interpretation is more probable. A comparable view of culpable slips of the tongue can be found among the sectarian literature at Qumran. In the Community Rule if someone speaks angrily against one of the priests the punishment is exclusion from the holy food for one year. If, however, he speaks unintentionally (שגגה), the pun-

²⁵ Segal suggests מלבו ולא as underlying the Greek καὶ οὐκ ἀπὸ ψυχῆς (115, ספר בן־סירה השלם).

ishment is for six months (1QS 7.2-3) ²⁶. These respective punishments imply that such a slip is culpable, but less so ²⁷.

Thus, here Ben Sira addresses the possibility that someone has said something which requires reproof. Ben Sira advises his students that it is possible that the person in question has said something that is culpable and foolish, but that it may well have been a slip of the tongue. While slips such as these are still culpable, the logic of the argument suggests that they are less so than intentional speech sins. As such, the recognition of their universality should engender empathy when dealing with such a person. Hence, according to the following verse, reproving such a person should be done all the more out of compassion rather than anger.

3. *A Slip of the Tongue as Saying Something Contemptible* (Sir 23,13-15)

A third place where the idea of a “slip of the tongue” appears is in the situation described in Sir 23,7-15, a passage in which only v. 11a-b has survived in the Hebrew. In a lesson on controlled speech to his students Ben Sira asserts that it is sinners and the arrogant who are overtaken by their own mouths (23,8), while those who submit themselves to Ben Sira’s instruction will not be “ensnared” by their lips (23,7). These statements are in substantial continuity with the outlook in Proverbs (e.g. 12,18). However, later in the lesson Ben Sira mentions an accidental speech sin, though the specific vocabulary of slipping or stumbling found elsewhere is not present.

Let not your mouth be accustomed to a lack of discipline ²⁸;
for in it is sinful speech.

²⁶ In P inadvertence ([7]λλψ) was a mitigating factor generally (Lev 5,18; Num 15,24-29) and in both P and D there is a distinction between accidental manslaughter and intentional murder (Num 35,10-16; Deut 4,41-43; 19,1-13). In 1QS 7.2-3 the sectarians appear to have extended the same kind of legal reasoning to the realm of speech ethics, analogously to Ben Sira.

²⁷ Another reference to a slip of the tongue in the Dead Sea Scrolls is found in 4QBeatitudes 14 ii 26-27. Though fragmentary, the context of such a slip (לקתנ) connects it with becoming trapped (line 27) and possibly with “inappropriate words” (line 28).

²⁸ The word “ἀπαίδευσία” has been translated “a lack of discipline” (cf. 4,25; 21,19.24; LXX Hos 7,16), but the adjective “ἄσυρής” (“lewd”) has been

Remember your father and mother
 when you sit among the great ones
 Lest you forget yourself in their presence
 and through your habit you make a fool of yourself.
 Then you will wish you had not been born
 and the day of your birth you will curse.
 A person who is accustomed to words of reproach
 will not become disciplined as long as he lives. (23,13-15)

The speech in this passage is characterized as lacking discipline and being harsh. If in v. 13a “ἄσυρής” (“lewd”) is doubtful on text-critical grounds, then any kind of impious speech is included in the warning. The consequences of social shame cited by Ben Sira must be understood in light of Ben Sira’s social location among the retainer class that served the Jerusalem aristocracy²⁹. While “sitting among the great” can refer to a banquet situation (cf. 32,9)³⁰, it can also refer to other social or political contexts (cf. 11,1; 38,3; 39,4). Even if sinful speech has minimal negative consequences in private contexts, the habituation of speaking sinfully or harshly increases the likelihood of a slip of the tongue when the social stakes are high. Such an accidental slip seems to be what Ben Sira has in mind in v. 14c-d when he speaks of forgetting oneself and looking like a fool because of bad speech habits. As a deterrent to allowing dangerous speech habits to develop, Ben Sira reminds his students of the resulting anguish and the shame that would be brought upon their parents. For the present purposes, what is particularly important is that this kind of a slip of the tongue, which has objectionable content, results through habit³¹. This comports with Ben Sira’s other state-

omitted (against many commentators). The condemnation of lewd speech has no precedent in Israelite wisdom literature, but it is a significant concern among Greek writers; see J.F. HULTIN, *The Ethics of Obscene Speech in Early Christianity and Its Environment* (NTSup 128; Leiden 2008) 120-128. The significant currency of “ἄσυρής” in Greek literature combined with its absence from both the *Vetus Latina* and the Syriac of 23,13 suggests that it is a secondary, exegetical addition or gloss in the Greek (cf. SMEND, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach*, 209).

²⁹ Regarding Ben Sira’s social location see R. HORSLEY, *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea* (Louisville, KY 2007) 53-70.

³⁰ So HULTIN, *Ethics of Obscene Speech*, 125.

³¹ Elsewhere Ben Sira especially associates lying with the danger of forming a bad habit (7,13; 20,25), though he does not mention accidents that result from the habit.

4. *A Slip of the Tongue and Slander by One's Enemies (Sir 28,24-26)*

As you hedge round your vineyard with thorns
 set barred doors over your mouth.
 As you seal up your silver and gold
 so balance and weigh your words.
 Take care not to slip by your tongue
 and fall victim to your foe waiting in ambush. (28,24-26) ³²

The defensiveness of Ben Sira's stance here is evident. While the first four cola are consonant with Proverbs' emphasis on restraining one's speech and are paralleled in 4Q*Sapiential Work A* (4Q412 I,5), the final bicolon reveals the added dimension. The Greek of v. 26a actually reads: "take care lest you slip by it" (πρόσχε μήπως ὀλισθηῖς ἐν αὐτῇ). The antecedent of the feminine "it" grammatically cannot be "mouth" or "words", and so the Latin supplies "tongue" (so also NRSV, Skehan & Di Lella). The Syriac has "fall" instead of "slip" and lacks the phrase "by it" altogether. Nevertheless, the parallel line in v. 26b suggests a word play whereby some kind of verbal "stumble" is in view for the first line (Segal suggests כשל rather than נפל)³³.

The idea of v. 26 is that a slip of the tongue can play right into the hands of enemies who are waiting in ambush for any opportunity to attack. Given that the context concerns the socially destructive sins of slander and gossip and v. 26b concerns falling victim to enemies, it is possible that such “slips of the tongue” in v. 26a

³² I have used the translation in SKEHAN – DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 361. There is a consensus among commentators that the Greek order of vv. 24-25 must be rearranged, as it appears here.

³³ SEGAL, ספר בן-סירא השלם, 173.

are not necessarily sinful. They may simply include information that one would not want to fall into the hands of enemies and that therefore needs to be carefully guarded ³⁴. However, if this verse is read in light of the prayer in 22,27–23,6, it could be inferred that the slip is at least a result of a lack of discipline, if not outright sin.

In comparison with the treatments in Proverbs and 4Q*Sapiential Work A*, what explains this new element of a slip of the tongue? In surveying other passages on slander and gossip an obvious explanation presents itself: Ben Sira had personal enemies and apparently this was a stinging lesson he had learned from experience. In the chapter just before this instruction Ben Sira says:

Whoever winks the eye plots mischief
and those who know him will keep their distance.
In your presence his mouth is all sweetness
and he admires your words,
but later he will twist your speech
and with your own words he will trip you up. (27,22-23 NRSV) ³⁵

The situation described here sounds remarkably similar to the one from which Ben Sira is trying to protect his students in 28,24–26 and is probably modeled on Prov 6,12–15 ³⁶. But then he makes a telling aside when he comments:

I have hated many things, but him above all
even the Lord hates him (27,24 NRSV)

³⁴ By using the analogies of hedging one's vineyard and securing one's money Ben Sira emphasizes how diligent the student must be in guarding the lips. Presumably, people then (as today) expend the most effort to protect their livelihoods.

³⁵ It is striking how frequently this concern occurs in Sirach. Note these verses: "Do not let the insolent bring you to your feet, or they may lie in ambush against your words" (8,11 NRSV); "An enemy speaks sweetly with his lips, but in his heart he plans to throw you into a pit; an enemy may have tears in his eyes, but if he finds an opportunity he will never have enough of your blood. If evil comes upon you, you will find him there ahead of you; pretending to help, he will trip you up" (12,16–17 NRSV). Also note 6,7–13 and 13,12–13.

³⁶ J.T. SANDERS, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom* (SBLMS 28; Chico, CA 1983) 33–34. The similarity of this statement to Theognis 93–96 is noted by T. MIDDENDORP, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus* (Leiden 1973) 21–22. Sanders argues that Ben Sira's reworking of Proverbs 6 has conflated it with the statements found in Theognis.

The second line is explainable from the context in Proverbs, where the behavior described in 6,12-15 is followed by an assurance in 6,16-19 that God hates such things, but it is difficult not to see the comment in the first line (which is not reflected in Prov 6) as having arisen from personal experience ³⁷. This suspicion seems to be confirmed at the very end of the book when Ben Sira offers a prayer of thanksgiving to God. Near the beginning of the prayer he says:

You have delivered me from the slanderous tongue
and from lips of lying miscreants
from malicious lips, slimy deceivers
arrows sped by treacherous tongues (51,2d-3.5b-6a) ³⁸

There is no love lost between Ben Sira and his opponents whom he pictures as having slandered him by twisting his words after having spoken sweetly to his face. Against this background of personal experience his advice in 28,24-26 makes perfect sense. A slight slip of the tongue, even if not being sinful in content, can have disastrous consequences and therefore the utmost discipline is required for the sake of self-protection. Yet, while it is best not to give one's enemies words that might be twisted around, Ben Sira appears convinced that in the event that one is slandered it will not be the last word. Eventually God will deliver the godly from the sinful speech of their enemies and will vindicate them before all.

* *
 *

Let us now draw together the salient points of our discussion. The first thing to observe is that all of Ben Sira's references to a slip of the tongue reveal a concern for the serious social ramifications such slips can have. They are all of substantive nature rather than some of the errors we commonly label as slips of the tongue. He is not talking about malapropisms, phonetic confusions, or even humorous and ba-

³⁷ Cf. "I hate three kinds of people, and I loathe their manner of life: a pauper who boasts, a rich person who lies, and an old fool who commits adultery" (Sir 25,2 NRSV).

³⁸ This wonderfully colorful translation is from SKEHAN – DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 560.

sically harmless “Freudian slips”³⁹. In each case where Ben Sira speaks of a slip of the tongue he is speaking of something said coherently and intelligibly that results in significant social damage. In terms of Ben Sira’s description of some speech errors as “slips of the tongue”, he appears to extrapolate from more general imagery found in Psalms and Proverbs in conformity to conceptions found in contemporary Hellenistic and Egyptian Demotic texts (similarly, 1QS).

In synthesizing Ben Sira’s teaching on slips of the tongue it is important to recognize that its absence from earlier books like Proverbs is surely not indicative of experience, as though the sages responsible for Proverbs were unaware of the kinds of situations that Ben Sira has labeled “slips” of the tongue. It is safe to presume that this phenomenon is common to human experience (which Ben Sira himself acknowledges as universal in 19,16). What has likely changed, therefore, is not the reality of the phenomenon, but the conceptualization of it. Proverbs speaks of rash speech and mistakes that ensnare someone, but these are coordinated with foolishness and wickedness. Whether such mistakes are unintentional or accidental is evidently not germane to their characterization, since the more fundamental issue is a lack of discipline.

On one level this remains unchanged in Ben Sira since he consistently views discipline or the lack thereof as the key factor in committing a slip of the tongue. In 20,18 it is the wicked who slip with their tongues, and in 23,14 the slip occurs from habituation in sinful speech. However, a more nuanced picture emerges when 19,16 and 28,26 are considered. In the former the unintentional nature of the speech error appears to mitigate its culpability. Ben Sira appeals to the universality of slips of the tongue as the ground for treating such speech errors with more compassion than brazen speech sins. In 28,26 it is possible that some slips are not necessarily culpable at all, though they can still be quite dangerous in the hands of an enemy. Ben Sira’s own experience alerted him to the need for extra vigilance to avoid slips in speaking, irrespective of the moral quality of a slip’s content. For those in the aristocracy, such as Ben Sira, the social and political consequences of speech errors and the recognized universality of slips of the tongue present a potent threat and necessitated a strong emphasis on the need to

³⁹ An engaging historical study of these kinds of slips is M. ERARD, *Um ... : Slips, Stumbles, and Verbal Blunders, and What They Mean* (New York 2007).

guard one's speech. In the end, the ultimate antidote to slips of the tongue is the cultivation of wisdom and discipline, even if realistically, in light of an ambiguous anthropology, these only reduce the likelihood of slips occurring.

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SUMMARY

This article examines the references to slips of the tongue in the speech ethics of Ben Sira. Against the background of Proverbs, this characterization of accidental speech errors represents a new development. Its origin can be traced to the confluence between sapiential metaphors for mistakes in life and the idea of a slip of the tongue in the Hellenistic world. Ben Sira's references to slips of the tongue are generally coordinated with a lack of discipline, though at least two verses seem to suggest that slips are not always sinful and that they represent a universal phenomenon, found even among the wisest sages.

Alcune differenze nella divisione delle parole nei manoscritti del TM

Nella storia della trasmissione del testo della bibbia ebraica, i masoreti giocano, com'è noto, un ruolo di primo piano ¹. Oggetto da lungo tempo di studi e di dibattito ², nell'attività di questi scribi si è voluta cogliere soprattutto un'intenzione "conservativa", riflesso, probabilmente, delle istanze di ritorno, per così dire, alla *sola Scriptura* promosse dal movimento caraita ³. Tuttavia, un'analisi più dettagliata delle tecniche messe in atto dai masoreti per la fissazione del testo scritturistico — cominciando dalla vocalizzazione, fino ad arrivare agli accenti, ai segni diacritici come il *maqṣef* e alle varianti del *Qere/Ketib* — rivela la compresenza di molteplici fattori all'opera: oltre a elementi di tipo grammaticale o fonetico, anche altri più o meno esplicitamente "interpretativi" ⁴. Tali dati emergono oltre che dal confronto con le versioni antiche e con la letteratura rabbinica, anche dalla diversità che si riscontrano all'interno dei manoscritti del TM, in particolare per quanto riguarda i due più rappresentativi in nostro possesso: il *Codex Leningradensis* (= L) e il Codice di Aleppo (= A).

All'interno di questo quadro va collocata anche la presenza di differenze nella divisione delle parole tra A e L, particolarmente messa in luce da Yeivin nel suo monumentale studio su A ⁵. Poiché tali diversità non sembrano riconducibili a criteri univocamente identificabili ⁶, questo fenomeno è stato relativamente poco stu-

¹ Sugli "ideali" dei masoreti, cf. A. DOTAN, "Masorah", *EJ* 13 (2007) 603-656 (con estesissima bibliografia).

² Cf. tra gli altri: I. YEIVIN, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* (Masoretic Studies 5; Chico, CA 1980).

³ Cf. B. CHIESA, *Filologia storica della Bibbia ebraica*. I: Da Origene al Medioevo (Studi Biblici 125; Brescia 2000) 137-165.

⁴ Cf. la rassegna di C.D. GINSBURG, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London 1897). Limitatamente ai casi di *Qere/Ketib*, cf. B. COSTACURTA, "Implicazioni semantiche in alcuni casi di *Qere-Ketib*", *Bib* 71 (1990) 229-231.

⁵ I. YEIVIN, *The Aleppo Codex of the Bible. A Study of Its Vocalization and Accentuation* (Publications of the Hebrew University Bible Project 3; Jerusalem 1968) 78-83 (Heb.).

⁶ Come "confessa" YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 78-79.

diato, pur potendo contribuire, a nostro parere, a mettere in luce la natura interpretativa di alcune opzioni dei masoreti e ad ampliare, così, la nostra percezione delle ragioni delle loro scelte testuali.

Il presente lavoro intende offrire non tanto una visione globale della problematica quanto un contributo iniziale in questo campo di ricerca. Dopo una prima descrizione dello *status quaestionis* — principalmente sulla base dell'analisi di Yeivin —, ci soffermeremo su quattro casi scelti (Sal 9,1; 102,4; Gb 24,6; 2 Re 6,25), in modo tale da poter poi, nelle conclusioni, formulare alcune ipotesi circa l'origine e le cause di queste variazioni ⁷.

I. *Status quaestionis*

Nella sua monografia, Yeivin enumera circa 67 occorrenze — nella maggior parte dei casi nomi propri (circa 39 casi) o composti con preposizioni o parole affini, quali, ad esempio, **רַב** o **שָׂר** (circa 13 casi) — di differente divisione di parole tra A e L. Tra queste, una menzione particolare spetta alle parole combinate con l'abbreviazione del nome divino **יְה**, come: **יְהִלְלוּ**; **יְהִמְרְחוּ**. A riguardo di queste varianti, però, l'autore “confessa” la difficoltà di comprenderne l'origine, stante il fatto che non esistono regole di divisione delle parole. In molti casi, non si può andare, secondo Yeivin, al di là dell'attribuzione di questa o quella variante alla tradizione di riferimento — orientale o occidentale ⁸.

Va notato anzitutto che la rilevante presenza di diverse divisioni nei nomi propri non sorprende del tutto: questi, infatti, sono suscettibili di essere interpretati in base alla loro (vera o presunta) etimologia o alle associazioni di idee che possono generare ⁹. Nei testi biblici, il nome di un luogo o di un personaggio spesso funziona da “parola-guida” e si trova intrecciato in una serie — a volte molto complessa — di rimandi, richiami e giochi di parole con altri ele-

⁷ Ringrazio cordialmente il prof. A. Schenker per aver stimolato la mia ricerca e per la sua disponibilità. Il mio ringraziamento va anche al prof. A. Dotan per le sue preziose indicazioni.

⁸ YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 78-79.

⁹ Sulla particolare concezione del nome nella Scrittura, cf. Y. ZAKOVITCH, *Inner-biblical and Extra-biblical Midrash and the Relationship between them* (Tel Aviv 2009) 198-199 (Heb.) (con bibliografia).

menti del testo ¹⁰. La grafia oscillante, quanto a divisione, può forse riflettere questo *status* del nome biblico, oltre che — certamente — possibili incomprensioni o interpretazioni errate della sua origine ¹¹. Così, ad esempio, possono rientrare in queste considerazioni nomi quali ¹²: אֲבִיעַד (Is 9,5 ¹³); אֵיכָבוֹד (1 Sam 4,21; L: אֵיכָבוֹד ¹⁴); כְּדָרְלֵעֶמֶר (Gn 14,17 ¹⁵; L: כְּדָרְלֵעֶמֶר); מַפִּיבֶשֶׁת (in 2 Sam 16,1.4; 21,7; L scrive: מַפִּיבֶשֶׁת ¹⁶); עֶשְׂהָאֵל (in 2 Sam 2,30; 3,27; 23,24; 1 Cr 2,16; 11,26; 27,7; L scrive: עֶשְׂהָאֵל ¹⁷); פִּיבֶסֶת (Ez 30,17 ¹⁸).

D'altro canto, la grafia “oscillante” di alcuni lessemi — non nomi propri ¹⁹ composti con il nome divino “abbreviato” יְה (soprattutto, ovviamente, יְה הָלֵל ²⁰) può forse riflettere un’incertezza sulla natura dell’espressione: “formula” a sé stante — come esclamazione, dossologia, ecc. — oppure espressione da intendersi nella sua sintassi “ordinaria” ²¹ (cf. anche il già citato יְה מִרְחָב oppure יְה הַבְּתִיָּה in Ct 8,6 ²²). Il discorso vale, per analogia, per i titoli di funzionari regali composti con רַב e שָׂר: רַב־מֶגֶן (Ger 39,3); רַב־סָרִיס (1 Re 18,17; Ger 39,3.13); רַב־שָׂקָה (2 Re 18,17.19.26.27.28.37; 19,4.8; 25,8.10.11.12.15.18.20; Is 36,2.4.11.12.13.22; 37,4.8); שָׂר־סָכִים (Ger

¹⁰ Cf. M. GARSIEL, *Biblical Names. A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* (Ramat Gan 1991).

¹¹ Cf. il fenomeno delle “false etimologie”: ZAKOVITCH, *Inner-biblical*, 199 e *passim*.

¹² Per l’elenco completo, cf. YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 79-84.

¹³ Questo nome è propriamente un titolo (messianico?), il cui senso potrebbe essere: “padre di eternità”, “padre per sempre”. Cf. tra gli altri: B.S. CHILDS, *Isaiah* (Louisville, KY 2000) 78-81 (con bibliografia). A legge come riportato in corpo di testo, L legge אֲבִיעַד.

¹⁴ In 1 Sam 14,3, L legge אֵיכָבוֹד.

¹⁵ Il nome ricorre anche in Gen 14,1.4.5.9, in tutti casi scritto (anche in L): כְּדָרְלֵעֶמֶר. Cf. YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 81.

¹⁶ In 2 Sam 19,25; 21,8, si trova מַפִּבֶשֶׁת. Negli altri casi, A e L coincidono.

¹⁷ Cf. la nota di YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 83, per altre attestazioni.

¹⁸ Cf. YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 83, per le attestazioni della forma פִּיבֶסֶת.

¹⁹ Non rientra in questo caso il nome “proprio” (o titolo?) יְהִידִיָּה di 2 Sam 12,25, per il quale cf. YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 81.

²⁰ Cf. l’ampia nota di YEIVIN *Aleppo*, 80-81.

²¹ Per l’espressione יְה הָלֵל, questo “dilemma” si riflette in particolare nella scelta di “trascrivere” e non tradurre nella LXX e nella Vulgata. Cf. tra gli altri C. WESTERMANN, “הָלֵל”, *THAT I*, 501-502.

²² Per questo caso, cf. YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 83.

39,3) — casi tutti che possono avere — dal punto di vista dell'opzione tra interpretazione “etimologica” o “formulaica” — punti di contatto con le diverse divisioni dei nomi propri.

II. Quattro casi scelti

In questa sede intendiamo soffermarci su quattro casi di differenza nella divisione delle parole — alcuni dei quali sono note *crux interpretum* — non elencabili tra i nomi propri o tra i composti sopra elencati. Dovendo essere la nostra scelta limitata, presteremo attenzione a quelle varianti in cui sia forse possibile intravedere “in filigrana” un possibile intervento interpretativo degli scribi.

1. *Sal 9,1*

In *Sal 9,1*, compare in A²³ la forma **עַל־מוֹת**, “sulla, per la morte [del figlio]” invece in L **עַל מוֹת**²⁴. La *masora parva* di L riporta: **בְּ כַת תְּרִי מִלֵּיָן** (“in due [casi questa occorrenza è] scritta [come] due parole”) e considera **מוֹת** come una parola singola — vale a dire che, *contra textum*, i masoreti leggono due parole dove ce n'è scritta una sola. A questo proposito Yeivin riporta una lista di parole prese dalla masora del Manoscritto Or. 2373, custodito al British Museum, in cui sono elencati casi simili, come ad es.: **יְפִיפִית** (*Sal 45,3*); **וַחַל יִתָּם** (*Pr 25,12*); **הַבְּהֵב** (*Os 8,13*); **אֵל קוֹם** (*Pr 30,31*); **בִּג פַּת בֵּן** (*Dn 1,5; 11,26*)²⁵.

Le versioni traducono in modi diversi. Il Tg legge: **עַל מִיתוֹתָא** **דְּגִבְרָא דִּי נִפְק מִבְּיַי מִשְׁרִייתָא**, “sulla morte dell'eroe che uscì di mezzo gli accampamenti”; l'“eroe” di cui si parla è Golia (cf. Tg di *1 Sam 17,4*), definito **אִישׁ־הַבְּנִים** in *1 Sam 17,4*, notazione che sembra aver dato origine al **מִשְׁרִייתָא** del Tg²⁶. Più interessante appare la lezione della LXX: **περὶ τῶν κρυπτῶν τοῦ υἱοῦ** (*Vulgata: pro occultis filii*), “circa le cose nascoste del figlio”, che pre-

²³ Cf. anche i manoscritti elencati in YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 83.

²⁴ Molti manoscritti — come segnala Bardtke nella nota della BHS — riportano il testo **עַל־מוֹת**.

²⁵ YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 83.

²⁶ Cf. D.M. STEC, *The Targum of the Psalms* (The Aramaic Bible 16; London 2004) 38.

suppone forse come testo ebraico: **עַל-עֲלֵמוֹת לְבֵן**, come rileva anche Bardtke nella nota *ad locum* della BHS. È da segnalare, in questa variante, l'“inserimento” della preposizione **עַל**, desunta forse dal contesto (titolo del salmo e indicazione “melodica”²⁷) o dal parallelo di Sal 46,1 (cf. sotto) — a meno che, ovviamente, non si voglia supporre che la LXX leggesse effettivamente come testo consonantico **עַל עַל מוֹת**, in cui **עַל** è poi, per qualche ragione, caduto.

La lettura di A (due parole) sembra, dunque, implicita nella nota della masora di L, nonostante le versioni, di fatto, presuppongano (almeno parzialmente) l'ortografia di L (una parola)²⁸. Il testo di A sembra più “naturale”²⁹, anche se difficilmente la sequenza **עַל-מוֹת לְבֵן** — alla lettera: “sulla morte, al/per il figlio” — si può interpretare come catena costrutta³⁰; per contro, la grafia “unita” sembra meno problematica sintatticamente, anche se la sequenza **עַל מוֹת לְבֵן** (senza **עַל** preposto, da tradurre forse: “le cose nascoste del figlio”) non è di facile comprensione ed è forse anche per questa ragione che la LXX ha probabilmente “inserito” un **עַל** prima dell'espressione.

Un'espressione simile ricorre anche in Sal 46,1 (**עַל-עֲלֵמוֹת**), ugualmente compresa in modo diverso dalle versioni: ad esempio, LXX (πρὸς τὸν κρυπτόν, cioè: **עַל-עֲלֵמוֹת**); Simmaco (αὐτοκρυπτός, cioè: **עַל-עֲלֵמוֹת**); Tg (בְּזֶמַן דִּאֲתַכְסִי אֲבוּהוֹן מְנַהוֹן), “nel tempo in cui i loro padri si nascosero da essi”, che presuppone forse una lettura: **עַל מוֹת**³¹. Ugualmente, alcuni manoscritti riportano: **עַל מוֹת**³². I medesimi problemi si riscontrano anche per la nota espressione **עַל-מוֹת** (così in L) in 48,15: le versioni vocalizzano o dividono il testo in modo

²⁷ Sulle questioni generate da questa parola, C.F. KEIL – F. DELITZSCH, *Biblischer Kommentar über das Alte Testament*. IV.I: Psalmen (Leipzig 41883) 123-124.

²⁸ Tg presuppone entrambe le possibilità **עַל מִיתוּתָא דְגִבְרָא דִי** (**עַל** **מִיתוּתָא** **דְגִבְרָא** **דִי**) oppure **נִפְק מִבְּנֵי מִשְׁרִייתָא** (**עַל** **בְּסִימוֹת מִקְל פּוֹנִין**); nella Peshitta manca questo versetto.

²⁹ Sulle implicazioni teologiche della lettura A cf. G. BARBIERO, *Das erste Psalmenbuch als Einheit*. Eine synchrone Analyse von Psalm 1-41 (ÖBS 16; Frankfurt et al. 1999) 92-93.

³⁰ In M. COHEN, *Mikra'ot Gedolot “Haketer”*. A Revised and Augmented Scientific Edition of “Mikra'ot Gedolot” Based on the Aleppo Codex and early Medieval MSS. Psalms I (Ramat-Gan 32008) 26-27, sono riportati i pareri di Rashi, Ibn Ezra e Kimchi che cercano di risolvere questa incongruenza.

³¹ Anche in questo caso, il versetto non è riportato dalla Peshitta.

³² Cf. la nota *ad locum* di Bardtke per la BHS.

diverso (LXX: ποιμανεi ημας εις τους αιωνας; Tg: יִדְבֵּר יְיָ בְּיוֹמֵי מַלְיוּתָא, “ci condurrà nei giorni della nostra giovinezza”; Vulgata: *erit dux noster in morte*; Peshitta: ܡܠܟܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܪܬܐ [var: ܠܠܐ] ܡܪܬܐ, “mi condurrà al di là della morte”), mentre alcuni manoscritti riportano על־מֹות³³.

Ci troviamo, dunque, di fronte ad una parola (preposizione + sostantivo) che si può dividere in due modi, inserita in un contesto sintattico particolare, per cui sussistono due (o più) tradizioni di lettura. Non potendo entrare nel merito delle complesse questioni filologiche implicate da queste tre occorrenze — anche in questo caso, solo nel libro dei Salmi — raccogliamo più modestamente tre osservazioni utili alla nostra ricerca:

1. la lettura di A e di L è, di fatto, identica; la differenza sembra consistere nel fatto che L ha preservato — per qualche ragione — la parola senza divisione, pur leggendola divisa³⁴;
2. sembra, quindi, che il testo consonantico si presti a due interpretazioni diverse, che implicano due vocalizzazioni diverse, entrambe non prive di difficoltà: על־מֹות si adatta meglio al contesto (titolo, indicazione “melodica”) ma è sintatticamente difficile; על־מֹות è diversamente interpretabile ma implica un “ritocco” (inserimento di על);
3. il testo di A e di L può essere, dunque, il risultato della caduta di על per aplografia e le versioni forse conservano una migliore *Vorlage*; oppure, il testo consonantico על־מֹות è di difficile interpretazione in unione a לִבִּי e questo ha dato origine a tentativi diversi di armonizzazione. L'accordo tra A e L sembra far propendere per quest'ultima soluzione e vedere nelle versioni un tentativo di soluzione successivo. Sal 46,1, è un caso simile a Sal 9,1, ma non identico; Sal 48,13, per contro, è del tutto identico.

La variante ortografica על־מֹות o על־מֹות in Sal 9,1; 46,1; 48,13, tradisce, quindi, il convergere di asperità semantiche e sintattiche nell'interpretazione della parola³⁵, stante la difficoltà di ricostruire nei diversi casi la *Vorlage* del testo.

³³ Cf. *ad locum* la nota di Bardtke nella BHS, inoltre KEIL – DELITZSCH, *Psalmen*, 382.

³⁴ Le versioni, quando vocalizzano diversamente il gruppo consonantico, presuppongono sempre la lettura על־מֹות, un'unica parola.

³⁵ Le conseguenze per l'interpretazione di על־מֹות in 48,15, ad esempio,

Alla luce di queste considerazioni, la lettura di L in Sal 9,1, appare comunque abbastanza singolare: pur presupponendo la divisione della parola, infatti (anche dal punto di vista della vocalizzazione!), il testo è scritto in modo continuo. Si possono formulare molte ipotesi in merito ³⁶; rimane, comunque, abbastanza chiaro che l'incertezza della tradizione manoscritta — in particolare di L — è il risultato dell'intreccio di questioni non solo grammaticali.

2. Sal 102,4

In Sal 102,4, si trova: כְּמוֹ-קֵד in L e כְּמוֹקֵד, “come un braciere”, in A ³⁷, dove la lettura di L appare, anche in questo caso, minoritaria rispetto ai manoscritti che concordano con A. Nella nota della BHS, Bardtke indica che molti manoscritti leggono: כְּמוֹקֵד. La *masora parva* di L si limita a segnalare con ל la parola קֵד, leggendola separatamente da כְּמוֹ. Dal canto loro, così traducono le versioni: LXX (ωσει φρυγισον, “come legna da ardere” o “rametti secchi” ³⁸), il Tg (הֵיךְ תִּפִּיא, “come il focolare”), la Vulgata (*quasi frisa*, “come una padella” ³⁹) e la Peshitta (מִתַּי מִתְּפִיא, “come le pire, i focolari” ⁴⁰). Apparentemente, tutte le traduzioni antiche, dunque, leggono כְּמוֹקֵד.

La lettura כְּמוֹקֵד presuppone la parola מוֹקֵד, “massa bruciante” o “braciere”, presente altrove solo in Is 33,14 (מוֹקֵדֵי עוֹלָם), nome derivato dalla radice יָקַד, “bruciare” (cf. Dt 32,22; Lv 6,9.12.13; Is 10,16; 65,5; Ger 15,14; 17,14 ⁴¹). La costruzione con כ si inserisce bene in parallelo a בַּעֲשֵׂן, presente nella prima parte del versetto ⁴².

sono rilevanti; cf. ad esempio G. BARBIERO, “Il secondo e il terzo libro dei Salmi (Sal 42-89): due libri paralleli”, *RivB* 58 (2010) 150.

³⁶ Cf. D. BARTHÉLEMY, *Critique Textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*. 2. Psau-
mes (OBO 50/4; Göttingen 2005) 283-287, per la rassegna delle ipotesi sul
testo analogo di Sal 49,15.

³⁷ La lettura separata è segnalata anche nei manoscritti con vocalizzazione
babilonese. Cf. sempre YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 82, per l'elenco dei manoscritti che
seguono le due letture.

³⁸ Cf. G.R. CASTELLINO, *Libro dei Salmi* (SB.VT; Torino 1955) 219.

³⁹ Così CASTELLINO, *Salmi*, 219.

⁴⁰ Tra i commentatori medievali, Kimchi legge כְּמוֹקֵד, mentre Ibn Ezra
afferma: “e la parola כְּמוֹקֵד – due [parole]”, leggendo anche lui come A e
affini. Cf. COHEN, *Mikra'ot Gedolot*, II, 96-97.

⁴¹ Cf. anche מוֹקֵדָה, “focolare, griglia, padella”, in Lv 6,9.

⁴² Bardtke segnala come molti manoscritti e alcune versioni (LXX, Tar-
gum, Girolamo) leggano בַּעֲשֵׂן e non בַּעֲשֵׂן.

Per contro, la lettura כְּמוֹ-קֵד presuppone: 1. l'uso della preposizione כְּמוֹ, forma (non esclusivamente) poetica di כּ ⁴³; 2. la parola קֵד, di difficile interpretazione: forse anch'essa derivata da יָקַד, con significato identico a מוֹקֵד ⁴⁴ o forse collegata alla radice קִדַּד, "piegarsi, inginocchiarsi", di cui costituirebbe una forma nominale allo stesso modo di altri derivati (ad es. נִדַּד da נָדָה; קִנָּן da קָנָן; ecc.).

Di per sé, la grafia della parola non presenterebbe particolari ambiguità di lettura: tanto più sorprende, quindi, la lettura di L, vista la rarità (*hapax legomenon*!) del sostantivo קֵד. Inoltre, a livello sillabico, le letture di A e di L non comportano una differente partizione della parola: כְּמוֹקֵד, infatti, contiene tre sillabe (parallelo al trisillabico בַּעֲשֵׂן della prima parte del versetto) proprio come כְּמוֹ-קֵד. La lettura di L, però, comporterebbe rispetto ad A un bilanciamento, dal punto di vista del numero di parole, tra le due metà del versetto: 4+4 ⁴⁵. Tuttavia, che la grafia di L possa essere stata motivata dalla "necessità" di bilanciare — a livello di numero di parole — il versetto, resta, in linea teorica, un'ipotesi possibile, anche se difficile da dimostrare, poiché bisognerebbe sciogliere due difficoltà: che una simile divisione della parola rimonti all'autore del testo consonantico, al quale si deve — verosimilmente — ascriverne anche la "versificazione"; che questa divisione non sia stata percepita da una grande parte della tradizione scribale. Resta poi, ovviamente, da mostrare la plausibilità semantica della divisione di L.

Si può forse formulare un'ipotesi esplicativa a partire dall'ambiguità dell'espressione כְּמוֹקֵד, vocalizzata con *shva* sotto la preposizione (כְּמוֹקֵד). Gli scribi di L possono aver voluto sottolineare una eventuale doppia lettura della parola, ai loro occhi giustificata dal considerare קֵד come sostantivo (o aggettivo?) a sé stante. Tale possibilità può richiamarsi anche all'incertezza delle versioni, in particolare della LXX, che — come visto — traduce con φρυγιον, "legna da ardere", vocabolo diverso da "focolare" o "padella" scelto dalle altre traduzioni. Il sostantivo φρυγιον, del resto, non ricorre altrove nella LXX.

⁴³ Cf. B.K. WALTKE – M. O'CONNOR, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN 1990) 202. La preposizione occorre, in questa forma, 27 volte nei Salmi, di cui 20 senza suffisso.

⁴⁴ Così KEIL – DELITZSCH, *Psalmen*, 672, che commenta: "Die LA כְּמוֹ קֵד [...] bereichert bei gleichem Sinn das Lex. mit einem Worte, welches schwerlich je existiert hat".

⁴⁵ Così, ad esempio, C. LABUSCHAGNE (www.labuschagne.nl/ps102.pdf).

Tale lettura può aver trovato “incentivo” anche nella presenza di costruzioni simili con la preposizione כִּמוֹ nel TM: cf., ad esempio, כִּמוֹ-נֶדַר (Es 15,8; Sal 78,13); כִּמוֹ-כֵן (Is 51,6); כִּמוֹ-אֵל (Gb 19,22); כִּמוֹ-אֵשׁ (Sal 79,5; 89,47; Gb 28,5); כִּמוֹ-זֶר (Os 8,12); כִּמוֹ-חַי (Sal 58,10) ⁴⁶. Allo stesso modo, infine, l’incertezza circa il significato del vocabolo מוֹקֵד può aver ugualmente influito sulla decisione dei masoreti: tale esitazione è, infatti, testimoniata anche dalle versioni antiche. Ad esempio מוֹקֵדֵי עוֹלָם in Is 33,14, viene tradotto con *ardoribus sempiternis* (Vulgata); τῶν τοπῶν τοῦ αἰῶ-νις (LXX); יְקִידַת עוֹלָם (“ardore eterno”; Targum); חַיְתָּה (“ardore di eternità”; Peshitta). Allo stesso modo, מוֹקֵדָה in Lv 6,2, trova diverse traduzioni: *cremabitur* (Vulgata); ἐπι τῆς καυσέως αὐτῆς (LXX); דִּמְתוֹקֵדַע (“che arde”; Targum); הִמְתָּה (“che arde”; Peshitta). In quest’ultimo caso, le differenze si accentuano perché le versioni — a parte la LXX — sembrano leggere un verbo piuttosto che un sostantivo: nel Targum un participio; nella Vulgata e nella Peshitta un verbo finito al passato.

Quali che possano essere stati, comunque, i presupposti che hanno portato gli scribi di L ad utilizzare questa divisione, due punti si possono considerare più che probabili: 1. il *maqfef* indica la divisione della parola e non un “aiuto” alla lettura ⁴⁷; 2. questa lettura può essere stata causata da motivazioni semantiche e non solo puramente grammaticali o fonetiche ⁴⁸.

3. Gb 24,6

In Gb 24,6, sia A (e alcuni manoscritti) che L leggono בִּלְיָלוֹ, mentre altri manoscritti ⁴⁹ leggono la parola separata, בִּלְיָ לֹ, alla lettera: “che non è a lui” ⁵⁰. Gerleman, nella nota *ad locum* della BHS, riporta una

⁴⁶ La preposizione si trova 141 volte nel TM, 84 volte costruita con suffissi, 43 con sostantivi, 6 con verbi e 5 con aggettivi.

⁴⁷ Come conferma la nota masoretica su קֶדַע. Sull’uso del *maqfef*, cf. tra gli altri: YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 234-237; *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, 229-236 (con casistica e letteratura).

⁴⁸ L’utilizzo di un termine riferito agli arredi del tempio (in particolare, all’altare) può aver influito nella scelta dei masoreti? Se sì, si tratterebbe di una sorta di “eufemismo”: cf. R. GORDIS, *The Biblical Text in the Making. A Study of the Kethib-Qere* (New York ²1971) 16, 30-36, 86.

⁴⁹ Cf. l’elenco in YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 80.

⁵⁰ La lettura riportata da YEIVIN (cf. nota precedente) presuppone una parola divisa, in forza degli accenti (qui non riproducibili graficamente), in due.

variante in alcuni manoscritti (בל יל א) ⁵¹ e il presunto testo alla base della LXX (προ ωρας ουκ αυτων οντα = בל יל לו). Il Tg (בל יל דל הון), “che non è a loro”) presuppone forse un testo separato e così la Vulgata (*non suum*) e la Peshitta (ܠܗ ܕܠܗܡܗ = בל יל בל יל) ⁵².

La differenza tra A, L e gli altri manoscritti con le versioni si basa sull'ambiguità stessa della parola: בל יל, infatti, significa “foraggio” (cf. Is 30,24; Gb 6,5: יגעה שור על בל יל), mentre l'espressione בל יל, si può tradurre: “che non è a lui”, “non gli appartiene” o “senza di lui”. Nel caso della grafia di A e L si dovrebbe tradurre il versetto: “nel campo del suo foraggio mieteranno e la vigna dell'empio racimoleranno” ⁵³; nel caso della grafia “separata”, la frase suonerebbe: “nel campo non suo [oppure: senza di lui] mieteranno e la vigna dell'empio racimoleranno”. La Peshitta e la LXX sembrano fare un “compromesso” tra le due letture: “nel campo di un foraggio non loro mieteranno” ⁵⁴. Va, comunque, notato che LXX, Targum e Peshitta mutano il suffisso di 3^a singolare (ל) in 3^a plurale per armonizzare la loro lettura nel contesto (cf. la traduzione del TM רשע con ασεβων; רשעי, *quem vi oppresserunt*; י י). In definitiva, il contesto in cui la parola appare non aiuta a scioglierne l'ambiguità, anche se la lettura di A e L può essere in un certo senso preferibile ⁵⁵.

Il caso inverso ricorre in Gb 18,15, in cui compare l'espressione מבל יל (“che non è a lui”; così A e L) e, in alcuni manoscritti, un'altra, forse divisa successivamente, ma originariamente unita (מבל יל). Gerlemann, nella nota *ad locum* della BHS, riporta un'emendazione ipotetica del testo (מבל) sulla base dell'accadico, mentre le versioni antiche divergono tra loro anche in questo caso: LXX (εν νυκτι αυτου = בל יל), Vulgata (*qui non est* = בל יל) ⁵⁶, Tg (מדל יתה ליה =

⁵¹ Per l'intercambiabilità tra א e ל in fine di parole, cf. E. TOV, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MI – Assen 2001) 251-252.

⁵² In Gb 6,5, la Peshitta traduce בל יל con ܠܗܢܗ. Cf. G. BORGONOVO, *La notte e il suo sole*. Luce e tenebre nel libro di Giobbe. Analisi simbolica (AnBib 135; Roma 1995) 153.

⁵³ Per questa traduzione di ל קט cf. tra gli altri BORGONOVO, *La notte*, 153.

⁵⁴ Per le ipotesi su quest'ultima lettura, cf. R. GORDIS, *The Book of Job*. Commentary, New Translation and Special Studies (Moreshet 2; New York 1978) 265-266.

⁵⁵ Cf. BORGONOVO, *La notte*, 153.

⁵⁶ L'espressione intera suona: *habitent in tabernaculo illius socii eius qui non est*. Le parole sottolineate non si trovano nel TM e sono forse un'adattamento al contesto.

מִבֵּל יִלּוֹ e, infine, Peshitta (ܡܠܟܐ ܐܝܬܐ, “che non è a lui” = מִבֵּל יִלּוֹ)⁵⁷.

Il contesto influisce in modo diretto sull’interpretazione dell’espressione: la lettura unita, infatti, non regge da nessun punto di vista (bisognerebbe, infatti, tradurla: “abiterai nella sua tenda [lontano?] dal suo foraggio”), mentre quella “separata” (מִבֵּל יִלּוֹ) è sicuramente meno “dura”, anche se il testo così diviso rimane, comunque, non agevole, come testimoniano le versioni della Vulgata e della LXX, che eliminano la preposizione (sempre che la variante non sia causata da differente *Vorlage*). Va anche notato che il traduttore greco — diversamente dal latino — legge il testo che “rimane” dopo la caduta di מִן — che può anche essere letta come “rafforzativo”⁵⁸ — unito e non separato (בֵּל יִלּוֹ).

Cosa può aver determinato gli scribi di A e L a leggere il gruppo consonantico בֵּל יִלּוֹ in un caso unito (Gb 24,6) e nell’altro separato (Gb 18,15)⁵⁹? L’espressione è certamente ambigua e l’oscillazione nella divisione rispecchia questa incertezza di fondo, almeno in un caso (Gb 24,6, come visto) non del tutto dirimibile a partire dal solo contesto. La diversità di lettura, in ogni caso, tra le diverse tradizioni manoscritte e, in misura maggiore, tra le due occorrenze del libro di Giobbe di questo gruppo consonantico può essere fatta risalire probabilmente a considerazioni di tipo ermeneutico-semantico e non puramente grammaticali.

4. 2 Re 6,25

Menzioniamo, infine, il caso di 2 Re 6,25, che coniuga il problema delle tradizioni manoscritte riguardo alla divisione della parola con quello del *Qere/Ketib*⁶⁰. In A leggiamo, al *Ketib*, la parola חֲרִי יוֹנִים, al *Qere* [יוֹנִים] דָּב; in L, invece, si legge חֲרִי יוֹנִים al *Ketib* e דָּב יוֹנִים al *Qere*. La supposta vocalizzazione — in L —

⁵⁷ Da notare come Vulgata e LXX non leggano la preposizione (ן) מִן presente nel TM e tradotta da Targum e Peshitta.

⁵⁸ Cf. S.R. DRIVER – G.B. GRAY, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (ICC 26; Edinburgh 1921) II, 119-120.166.

⁵⁹ Solo in Gb 18,15, si trova la preposizione בֵּל seguita da ל. Su 59 attestazioni nell’AT, solo in 9 casi, poi, essa è seguita da un lessema che non è né verbo (19x) né sostantivo (31x): אִשׁ (Es 14,11; 2 Re 1,3.6.16); אֶשֶׁר (Qo 3,11).

⁶⁰ YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 80.

del *Ketib* sarebbe חֲרִי יוֹנִים , quella del *Qere* דָּבַר יוֹנִים . Jepsen, nella nota alla BHS, riporta anche, come variante dei manoscritti, la lettura חֲרוֹנִים . Yeivin (80) riporta una menzione della masora secondo la quale questa è una delle parole che “è scritta due ma è letta una” (letta דְּבִיּוֹנִים e scritta יוֹנִים חֲרִי). Così le versioni: LXX ($\kappa\omicron\pi\rho\upsilon\varsigma\ \pi\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$), Vulgata (*stercoris columbarum*), Tg ($\text{זִיבֵל מִפְּקַת יוֹנִיָּא}$, “sterco, flusso di colomba”) e, infine, Peshitta (גִּזְתִּי לִסְחָר , “sterchi di colomba”). Tra queste opzioni, spicca la scelta della doppia traduzione del Tg: זִיבֵל per חֲרִי e מִפְּקַת per דָּבַר ; il targumista avrebbe, così, sciolto l’incertezza del TM traducendo sia il *Ketib* che il *Qere* ⁶¹.

In A, dunque, a differenza di L, troviamo due parole costruite in catena costrutta: nel caso del *Ketib*, $\text{חֲרִי} / \text{חֲרָאִים}$, “sterco” (cf. 2 Re 18,27=Is 36,12) e יוֹנָה , “colomba”; nel caso del *Qere*, risulta di difficile interpretazione la parola דָּבַר , forse anch’essa avente il senso di “sterco” (o “escrezione, flusso” secondo Köhler-Baumgartner) ⁶². In sintesi, le peculiarità delle due letture si possono così evidenziare:

1. l’espressione “sterchi di colombe” (lettura *Ketib* di A: חֲרִי יוֹנִים , forse da supporre anche per il *Ketib* di L) ⁶³ risulta, a prima vista, abbastanza insolita;
2. la lettura di L sembra interpretare, circa il *Ketib*, la sequenza consonantica come un’unica parola, un sostantivo in ן- , plurale maschile, avente forse lo stesso significato di “sterchi, escrementi” (dalla radice חֲרָא) ⁶⁴. Lo stesso si può supporre per il *Qere*, dove il probabile stato costruito (דָּבַר יוֹנִים , come in A) è interpretato come un unico sostantivo in ן- , plurale maschile, derivato dalla radice דָּוַב ;

⁶¹ Cf. D.J. HARRINGTON – A.J. SALDARINI, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets* (The Aramaic Bible 10; Edinburgh 1987) 276.

⁶² KB 198. Probabile radice דָּוַב (“languire, consumarsi”: Lv 26,16). Cf. דָּוַב da כל יין (Dt 28,65; Is 10,22; Rt 1,2; 4,9). Cf. siriano ܕܘܒܐ , “flusso (exfluxus)” da ܕܘܒܐ , “1. scorrere, avere una perdita (mestruale); 2. disperdere, consumare”: così J. PAYNE-SMITH (ed.), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*. Founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith (Oxford 1903) 84. La variante del *Qere* sarebbe eufemistica (“für anständiger gehalten”).

⁶³ Così sembra fare Jepsen nella nota della BHS.

⁶⁴ Questa lettura rimane ipotetica perché la scrittura חֲרִי יוֹנִים , con le due affiancate, è inusuale. Tale interpretazione potrebbe essere confermata dalla variante dei manoscritti indicati da Jepsen.

3. la lettura *Qere* di A, per contro, interpreta in entrambi i casi la sequenza consonantica come stato costruito, stante l'incertezza di decifrazione della parola קרה , usata come sinonimo "eufemistico" di חזא .

La presenza di "teste d'asino" (ראש־חמור) e "sterchi di colomba" tra i beni alimentari smerciati abitualmente (come sembra da intendersi dal contesto) nei mercati di Samaria è sembrata implausibile a molti commentatori e li ha spinti a cercare soluzioni diverse e ingegnose⁶⁵. Al di là, comunque, di questa supposta difficoltà dell'espressione nel contesto, la scelta di L *Ketib* sembra insolita. Gli scribi, come già notato, possono aver inteso una sola parola (con una grafia inusuale), oppure la *scriptio continua* dei due sostantivi in stato costruito può alludere alla natura "formulaica" dell'espressione, usata non più nel suo senso proprio ma in modo traslato. Questa ipotesi può forse trovare un appoggio sulla tradizione di lettura riportata dalla masora citata da Yeivin: la parola è scritta due ma letta una. In ultima analisi, con la loro scelta gli scribi di L avrebbero semplicemente "armonizzato" pronuncia e ortografia. Una simile soluzione può forse essere applicata al *Qere*, anche se, in questo caso, non si può del tutto escludere che L abbia interpretato l'espressione come una sola parola, un sostantivo di terminazione -ן derivato da רוב ⁶⁶.

Un aiuto nella lettura di questo caso ci può venire dalla considerazione di una delle quindici espressioni classificate dai masoreti come "scritta una ma lette due" ($\text{כתב מילה חדשה וקרא תורה}$)⁶⁷. Anche in queste occorrenze, infatti, la divisione di una parola nelle sue due (vere o presunte) componenti coinvolge considerazioni di natura morfologica e semantica.

⁶⁵ Cf. una "rassegna" in M.A. SWEENEY, *I & II Kings. A Commentary* (OTL 29; Louisville, KY – London 2007) 310-311. Interessante è l'ipotesi che חזא ייני fosse una sorta di "nome in codice" o "espressione popolare" per un certo prodotto: D. BARTHÉLEMY, *Critique Textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*. 1. Josué, Juges, Ruth, Samuel, Rois, Chroniques, Esdras, Néhémie, Esther (OBO 50/1; Göttingen 1982) 388.

⁶⁶ Che anche per il *Qere* valga lo stesso discorso del *Ketib* (una parola scritta due e letta una), lo mostra la lezione A.

⁶⁷ Gen 30,11; Es 4,2; Dt 33,2; Is 3,15; Ger 6,29; 18,3; Ez 8,6; Sal 10,10; 55,16; 123,4; Gb 38,1; 40,6; Ne 2,13; 1 Cr 9,4; 27,12. Per una trattazione di questi casi, cf. GORDIS, *Biblical Text, ad locum*.

Il parallelo più (sorprendentemente) vicino al nostro passo è Sal 123,4. Al termine del versetto si legge — al *Ketib* — l'espressione **לְגַאִיוֹנִים** [הַבוֹז] **לְגַאִיוֹנִים**, per cui la *masora parva* indica come *Qere* la divisione **לְגַאִי יוֹנִים**, vocalizzato come **לְגַאִי יוֹנִים**. Le versioni, d'altro canto, traducono nella seguente maniera: LXX (καὶ ἡ ἐξουθενώσις τοῖς υπερηφάνοις); Vulgata (*et despectionis superborum*); Targum (**דְּגִיּוּתְנִיא מְבַסְרִנִּיא**)⁶⁸; Peshitta (**ܠܓܝܐܝܝܢܝܡ ܕܓܝܐܝܝܢܝܡ**, “il disprezzo dei superbi” o **ܠܓܝܐܝܝܢܝܡ ܕܓܝܐܝܝܢܝܡ**, “la stupidità dei superbi”)⁶⁹.

Posto, quindi, che non si sia in presenza di differenti *Vorlage*, le versioni sembrano utilizzare due generi di “soluzione” delle difficoltà del TM: aggiungere la copula prima di **הַבוֹז** (LXX, Vulgata, Peshitta); trasformare il “dativo” **לְגַאִיוֹנִים** in genitivo (Vulgata, Targum, Peshitta). Per la nostra ricerca, è importante notare che, in definitiva, al di là del tentativo di armonizzare nel contesto il *Ketib*, tutte sembrano presupporre **גַּאִיוֹנִים**, “superbi”⁷⁰. Come intendere allora il *Qere*? Rashi si limita a constatare quello che già la masora indica e riferire l'espressione **גַּאִי יוֹנִים** (“la valle delle colombe”) a Gerusalemme⁷¹. Ibn Ezra, dal canto suo, la considera una parola unica, derivata dalla radice **גִּאָה** (Pr 8,13)⁷² secondo la forma di parole come **עַל יוֹן**, vale a dire una formazione nominale con terminazione **וֹן** - di radici aventi la III^a radicale “debole” (**ה** o **ו**).

Kimchi dà una spiegazione più articolata sia del *Ketib* che del *Qere*. Per il primo, ripete sostanzialmente le osservazioni di Ibn Ezra, aggiungendo due considerazioni sulla presenza della **ל** iniziale (**לְמַד הַפּוּעַל**), sulla **ן** finale (**וְהִנֵּנוּ נִסְפָּה**), sulla forma del verbo (**גַּאִים**) da una parte e sulla vocalizzazione legata alla gutturale (**נִשְׁתַּנוּ תְּנוּעוֹתָיו מִפְּנֵי אוֹת הַגֵּרֹן**) dall'altra. Le osservazioni sul *Qere* sono ancora più interessanti: **לְגַאִי יוֹנִים** deriverebbe da **גַּאִי**, stato costruito plurale di **גַּאִים** e **יוֹנִים**, che Kimchi collega a Sof 3,1

⁶⁸ Per le varianti su questa lezione nei manoscritti del Targum (**מְבַסְרִנִּיא** oppure **לְגִיּוּתְנִיא**), cf.: STEC, *The Targum*, 221.

⁶⁹ Cf. D.M. WALTER, *Psalms* (The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version II/3; Leiden 1980) 152.

⁷⁰ Cf. KEIL – DELITZSCH, *Psalmen*, 790-791. Per la vocalizzazione del *Ketib* (**לְגַאִיוֹנִים**) cf. Bardtke, nella nota *ad locum* della BHS.

⁷¹ Per i pareri di Rashi, Ibn Ezra e Kimhi, cf. COHEN, *Mikra'ot Gedolot*, II, 190-191.

⁷² Cf. anche Es 15,1²21²; Is 2,12; Ger 48,29; Ez 47,5; Sal 94,2; 140,6; Gb 8,11; 10,16; 40,11.12; Pr 15,25; 16,19.

(הַעִיר הַיּוֹנָה, forse: “la città, la colomba”) e Ger 46,16 (חֶרֶב הַיּוֹנָה, forse da tradurre: “la spada della colomba”), letti alla luce di Lv 25,17 (לֹא תוֹנִי אִישׁ אֶת־עֲמִיתוֹ) e Ez 45,8 (...נְשִׂאִי אֶת־עַמִּי), vale a dire intendendo יוֹנִים come participio *gal* maschile plurale di יָנָה, “opprimere, affliggere”⁷³. Anche a partire dalle traduzioni congetturali proposte, si nota che i passi di Sofonia e Geremia addotti da questo autore sono di difficile interpretazione, come emerge anche dalla ricognizione delle versioni antiche: per Sof 3,1, spicca la differenza tra LXX (ἡ πόλις ἡ περιστέρα) e Vulgata (*civitas columba*) con il Targum (קִרְתָּא דְּמִסְגִּיָּא לְאַרְגָּזָא), “città che abbonda nel provocare all’ira”⁷⁴; per Ger 46,16, abbiamo tre traduzioni diverse: Vulgata (*gladii columbae*), LXX (μαχαίρας ἑλλενικῆς = יוֹנִי חֶרֶב) e Targum (חֶרֶב סְגָאָה דְּהִיא כְּחֶמֶר מְרִוּיָא), “spada del nemico che è ubriaca come [di] vino”⁷⁵. In ogni caso, l’interpretazione che Kimchi dà a יוֹנָה in queste due occorrenze gli permette di evitare di leggere il *Qere* di Sal 123,4, come “orgogliosi delle colombe”⁷⁶ per adottare invece la traduzione, più “logica”, “orgogliosi degli oppressori” o “orgoglio degli oppressori”.

Queste osservazioni ci permettono di tirare le fila del discorso e collegarlo al caso di cui ci occupiamo, quello di 2 Re 6,25. La doppia lezione del *Qere/Ketib* produce due soluzioni semantiche diverse, che implicano una interpretazione diversa — dal punto di vista morfologico — del lessema in esame. La doppia lettura sorge, forse, dall’ambiguità della parola, sia dal punto di vista di derivazione, sia fonetica (“scritta una, letta due”) — ambiguità che comporta, di fatto, due interpretazioni ugualmente legittime.

Il caso di 2 Re 6,25, può essere accostato a Sal 123,4 — non da ultimo per la presenza singolare delle “colombe”! Anche in questo caso, la differenza tra A e L — quindi, non tanto di *Qere/Ketib* quanto di tradizioni di scrittura — si potrebbe spiegare alla luce di un’oscillazione morfologica e fonetica analoga: חֶרֶב יוֹנִים come

⁷³ Cf. Es 22,21; Lv 19,33; 25,14.17; Dt 23,17; Is 49,26; Ger 22,3; 25,38; 46,16; 50,16; Ez 18,7.12.16; 22,7.29; 45,8; 46,18; Sal 74,8.

⁷⁴ Cf. S. CARBONE – G. RIZZI, *Abaquq, Abdia, Nahum, Sofonia*. Secondo il testo ebraico masoretico, secondo la versione greca della LXX, secondo la parafrasi aramaica targumica (Bologna 1997) 426-427.

⁷⁵ Cf. W. McKANE, *Jeremiah* (ICC 42; Edinburgh 1996) II, 1129.

⁷⁶ E, probabilmente, di leggere Sof 3,1, come “la città, la colomba” e Ger 46,16, come “la spada della colomba”.

due parole o $\text{חַרְרִי}(\text{י})$ come una parola, derivata da חָרַר . Lo stesso sarebbe applicabile, come già detto, per i due Qere , דָּבִיּוּנִים e דָּב יוּנִים .

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Al termine di questa breve analisi, quali dati ricaviamo per l'interpretazione del fenomeno della diversa divisione di parole nelle tradizioni manoscritte del TM? Evidenziamo solo alcune osservazioni in maniera schematica:

1. il fattore da cui prende le mosse la diversa divisione delle parole che abbiamo brevemente esaminato è una possibile ambiguità di lettura di una data espressione ⁷⁷. Questo dato, nelle sue diverse “sfaccettature”, si può considerare all'origine, quindi, del fenomeno che stiamo considerando, anche se tra le espressioni esaminate tale “ambiguità” può essere in un caso (בְּמִוְקָד) solo supposta, stante la scarsità di attestazioni del sostantivo (o aggettivo) מִוְקָד . Si può forse con maggiore precisione dire che la doppia lettura è possibile là dove ha un senso compiuto agli occhi degli scribi;
2. l'ambiguità normalmente riguarda o la possibilità di leggere l'espressione come una o due parole, oppure di leggerla come due espressioni diverse;
3. non sembra possibile individuare una “regola” o nemmeno “tendenze” all'interno delle varie tradizioni ⁷⁸ che permettano di identificare in qualche modo i criteri con cui è stata “risolta” l'espressione ambigua ⁷⁹;
4. il contesto non sembra essere un fattore decisivo nella soluzione dell'ambiguità ⁸⁰. Allo stesso modo, in questi casi considerazioni

⁷⁷ Cf. le espressioni menzionate all'inizio della trattazione dei casi enumerati da YEIVIN (composti con חַר o con דָּב e שָׁר). Per i nomi propri il discorso può valere per analogia.

⁷⁸ Non sembra si possa dire che A tende “ad unire” e L “a dividere”. Cf. YEIVIN, *Aleppo*, 78-79.

⁷⁹ Si potrebbe parlare di “tipologie” di casi, in un modo puramente descrittivo e “fenomenologico”.

⁸⁰ Alcune divisioni non rendono ragione, né semanticamente né sintatticamente, del contesto in cui l'espressione appare.

di tipo semantico e grammaticale o fonetico/ortografico⁸¹ sembrano concorrere in misura uguale alla decisione degli scribi, senza che si possa predeterminare quale tra essi sia il fattore discriminante;

5. al di là della necessità di conservare e interpretare il testo secondo il suo מִשְׁנָה, non si può escludere, infine, che fattori ermeneutici più “ampi”, di tipo “midrashico”, abbiano influenzato, in alcuni casi, la scelta degli scribi⁸² — in analogia, ad esempio, a quanto ottenuto dai rabbini con il ricorso al procedimento denominato אֵל תִּקְרֵי⁸³.

Il quadro o lo “sfondo” che emerge da questo breve sommario si può così sintetizzare: gli scribi, trovandosi di fronte ad un’espressione per qualche motivo ambigua⁸⁴, decidono di volta in volta come dividere la parola (quindi, come interpretarla) in base a fattori di tipo grammaticale, fonetico o semantico e in relazione al contesto in cui questa appare. Questo “sforzo di interpretazione” spiega la diversità delle opzioni delle scuole scribali, anche di quelle che appaiono, a prima vista, “strane” o “implausibili”.

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SUMMARY

There is a well-known phenomenon in ancient manuscripts of MT, namely a diversity in word division. Scholars proposed different answers to this question. In the present article, I analyze four occurrences of that type in the Aleppo and the Leningrad (Saint Petersburg) Codex: Ps 9,1; 102,4; Job 24,6; 2 Kgs 6,25. I suggest that the variations are due not only to grammatical or phonetic reasons. They are also motivated by the midrashic tendency of scribes who try to solve in this way real or probable ambiguities in the consonantal text.

⁸¹ Cf. l’analogia con i casi di *Qere/Ketib* indicata nell’analisi di 2 Re 6,25.

⁸² Questo fattore è più evidente nei casi di nomi propri, situazione in cui diversi possono essere i livelli coinvolti: mettere in luce l’etimo (vero o presunto) del nome; la collocazione di quest’ultimo nel contesto (in riferimento alla “sorte” di chi lo porta); ecc. Cf. ZAKOVITCH, *Inner-biblical*, 198-199.

⁸³ Su questo punto cf. tra gli altri: S. TALMON, “Double Readings in the Masoretic Text”, *Textus* 1 (1960) 144-184.

⁸⁴ Per corruzione testuale; per tradizione di lettura; per oggettiva possibilità di una letturaincipite.

Analyse narrative de Mc 7,24-30 Difficultés et propositions

L'épisode dit de la Syrophénicienne, en Mc 7,24-30, est bien connu des spécialistes du problème synoptique et a fait couler beaucoup d'encre, car ni la théorie des deux sources ni celle de l'antériorité de Matthieu sur Marc n'expliquent de façon totalement satisfaisante la relation de dépendance existant entre Mc 7,24-30 et Mt 15,21-28. Un compte-rendu exhaustif et minutieux des difficultés synoptiques a été fait par J.F. Baudoz et P. Alonso ¹. Sur cet épisode, en particulier sa version marcienne, il n'existe pas encore de monographie utilisant l'approche narrative, seulement des articles ². Comme récit, Mc 7,24-30 n'est pourtant pas facile et constitue un défi pour l'approche narrative, comme on va le voir.

La question soulevée ici n'est pas de soi narrative. Les exégètes et commentateurs se demandent tous en effet si c'est la Syrophénicienne qui a réussi faire changer d'avis Jésus par sa réponse, ou si ce n'est pas plutôt la réaction de Jésus, apparemment dure, qui en appelle à la finesse et à la foi de la femme, et a en quelque sorte permis sa réponse. Bref, c'est l'énoncé de Jésus au v. 27 qui divise les interprètes, comme le note F.G. Downing: "Most commentators are embarrassed by Jesus' response. Much of the discussion of other issues often seems at least in part aimed to reduce this harshness. Perhaps the harshness stems from the early church, from controversies then. Perhaps it is in thick quotation marks: 'You know what

¹ J.F. BAUDOZ, *Les miettes de la table*. Étude synoptique et socio-religieuse de Mt 15, 21-28 et de Mc 7, 24-30 (Études bibliques NS 27; Paris 1995); P. ALONSO, *The Woman Who Changed Jesus*. Crossing Boundaries in Mark 7,24-30 (Biblical Tools and Studies 11; Leuven 2011).

² Voir, par ex., C. FOCANT, "Mc 7,24-31 par. Mt 15,21-29. Critique des sources et/ou étude narrative", *The Synoptic Gospels*. Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism (ed. C. FOCANT) (BETL 110; Leuven 1993) 39-75; J.P. SONNET, "Réflecteurs et/ou catalyseurs du Messie. De la fonction de certains personnages secondaires dans le récit de Marc", *Regards croisés sur la Bible*. Études sur le point de vue. Actes du III^e colloque international du Réseau de recherche en narrativité biblique, Paris, 8-10 juin 2006 (eds. O. FLICHY et alii) (LD. Hors série; Paris 2007) 365-377.

they say ...' Perhaps Jesus is testing the woman's faith and/or demanding humility. Perhaps he is really just working things out in his own mind. Perhaps with his 'Let the children be fed first' and perhaps, too, with his 'puppies', 'housedogs', he is already softening the harshness of what is to follow and providing a clue for the woman to pick up. There is no widespread agreement"³.

Si la question n'est pas narrative, elle sera ici traitée narrative-ment, après que certaines difficultés historico-critiques auront été présentées et résolues, pour mettre en valeur quelques particularités rédactionnelles et théologiques de Mc.

I. Étape préalable à l'analyse narrative

Pour que l'analyse narrative puisse se faire sur des bases solides, il importe de déterminer le sens de l'une ou l'autre expression.

1. καὶ εἰσελθὼν εἰς οἶκον (v. 24)

Ce n'est pas la maison de Mc 9,33 et 10,10, où Jésus se retire avec ses disciples pour leur expliquer toutes choses⁴. Les propriétaires de cette maison sont-ils païens ou juifs? Les historiens signalant que dans la zone rurale située autour de Tyr (et Sidon), il y avait aussi des villages juifs⁵, Jésus a pu y trouver hospitalité. Mais, étant donné ses propos en Mc 7,6-23, où il affirme que l'impureté

³ F.G. DOWNING, "The Woman from Syrophoenicia, and her Doggedness: Mark 7.24-31 (Matthew 15.21-28)", *Making Sense in (and of) the First Christian Century*, F.G. DOWNING (ed.) (JSNTS 197; Sheffield 2000) 109. Également, G. THEISSEN, "Lokal- und Sozialkolorit in der Geschichte von der Syrophönikischen Frau (Mark 7,24-30)" *ZNW* 75 (1984) 204-206. Sur la réponse de Jésus, presque tous pensent qu'elle est choquante et offensante. Cf., par ex., THEISSEN, "Lokal- und Sozialkolorit", 202: "Die Antwort Jesus ist moralisch anstößig". Comment, Jésus, jusque-là plein de compassion pour l'humanité souffrante, peut-il, à une mère lui demandant instamment de sauver sa petite fille, assimiler cette dernière à un chien?

⁴ Voir aussi Mc 7,17 et 9,28, avec le substantif οἶκος sans article, mais suivi de la mention des disciples.

⁵ THEISSEN, "Lokal- und Sozialkolorit", 208, qui s'appuie, entre autres, sur Josephus, *Bellum*, 2.588-590. Les Jews/Judeans étaient minoritaires en cette contrée.

n'est pas extérieure mais vient du cœur, indiquant par-là que les païens ne sont pas tous impurs, pourquoi n'aurait-il pas choisi de loger chez l'un d'entre eux? Si l'hypothèse d'un Jésus logeant chez un israélite semble plus vraisemblable, elle ne s'impose donc pas. Il est au demeurant plus intéressant de savoir pourquoi le narrateur mentionne ce fait, ce que l'analyse narrative devra chercher.

2. ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἣν Ἑλληνίς, Συροφονίκισσα τῷ γένει (v. 26)

Cette caractérisation en deux temps se trouve ailleurs dans le NT: en Ac 4,36⁶; 18,2.24⁷, mais aussi ailleurs, chez des auteurs juifs⁸ et païens⁹. Selon certains exégètes¹⁰, il est pour cela improbable que l'un ou l'autre des traits soit rédactionnel. Mais cette conclusion est trop rapide, car, s'il reprend manifestement un modèle en deux temps alors en usage, le narrateur a très bien pu utiliser des vocables qui sont les siens.

Le premier trait, Ἑλληνίς, dénote à la fois le monde culturel et linguistique auquel appartient la femme¹¹, mais aussi le fait qu'elle n'est pas israélite. Quant au deuxième, Συροφονίκισσα, il intrigue les exégètes et les historiens, car la Syrophénicie n'existait pas encore comme province à l'époque où furent écrits Mt et Mc¹². Si la raison pour laquelle le narrateur a utilisé cette dénomination reste obscure, on peut toutefois en conclure que Jésus et la femme ont pu échanger dans leurs langues respectives, l'araméen et le phénicien, voire même en grec, la femme, de par ses origines et son milieu de vie, devant connaître cette langue¹³. Certains exégètes se prononcent contre l'authenticité du *logion* proverbial¹⁴ de Jésus au v.27, parce que le jeu

⁶ Ainsi Barnabas est (1) Λευίτης, (2) Κύπριος τῷ γένει.

⁷ En Mt 15,22 aussi la description est double: (1) γυνὴ Χαναναία (2) ἀπὸ τῶν ὀρίων ἐκείνων ἐξελθοῦσα.

⁸ Josephus, *Vita*, 427; Philon, *de Abrahamo*, 251.

⁹ Heraclides Criticus, *Descriptio Graeciae*, 3.2.7-8; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 26.18.1.7-8.

¹⁰ THEISSEN, "Lokal- und Sozialkolorit," 213, cela dénoterait aussi un statut social supérieur.

¹¹ Selon THEISSEN, "Lokal- und Sozialkolorit", 210.

¹² En son *Bellum*, 3.35, Flavius Josèphe distingue encore la Phénicie et la Syrie. La division de la Syrie en Syrie Coele et Syrie Phénice semble s'être faite sous Hadrien. Cf. BAUDOZ, *Les miettes*, 122-132.

¹³ Cf. THEISSEN, "Lokal- und Sozialkolorit", 210-211.

¹⁴ Proverbial, en particulier parce que l'expression οὐ (ἐστιν) καλόν se rencontre en Pr 17,6; 18,6; 20,23; 24,3; 25,27. Également, Tb 8,6.

de mots λαβεῖν/βαλεῖν ne peut renvoyer qu'au grec; à quoi d'autres ont répondu (1) qu'un dialogue en cette langue était possible, un certain nombre de galiléens et de phéniciens devant commercer avec les grecs, (2) que, même si la langue utilisée fut l'araméen, le narrateur marcien a pu donner une forme grecque à la réponse de Jésus.

Ces deux traits ne sont pas les premiers par lesquels le narrateur caractérise ce personnage, qui est d'abord une femme (γυνή) ayant ¹⁵ une petite fille habitée par un esprit impur. S'il ajoute qu'elle est grecque et Syrophénicienne, c'est à cause de la manière dont elle salue Jésus: "elle tomba à ses pieds" (προσέπεσεν πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ, v. 25), en un geste de respect et de supplication, comme le firent avant elle des malades israélites ¹⁶. C'est parce qu'elle se comporte comme une israélite — et elle pouvait l'être, puisqu'il y avait des villages israélites dans les environs de Tyr — que le narrateur ajoute les deux traits signalant qu'elle ne l'est pas.

Ces précisions linguistiques étant fournies, il est possible de procéder à l'analyse narrative. Toutes les étapes n'en seront pas suivies, seulement celles nécessaires à la thèse ici défendue.

II. Les difficultés du récit et l'analyse narrative

Mc 7,24-30 suit les règles de composition des récits. La seule difficulté vient du v. 31, que certains rattachent à l'épisode de la Syrophénicienne, alors que d'autres y lisent le début du suivant, consacré à la guérison du sourd-muet. Les premiers notent en effet que les vv. 24 et 31 ont en commun les mêmes expressions: εἰς τὰ ὄρια Τύρου en 24 et ἐκ τῶν ὁρίων Τύρου en 31, ce qui en ferait une inclusion ¹⁷.

¹⁵ Comme le signalent les commentateurs, la construction de la relative ἥς ... αὐτῆς (v.25) est sémitique et correspond au לַהּ/לָּהּ ... אִשָּׁה; cf. Mc 1,7 (οὗ αὐτοῦ).

¹⁶ Cf. les formulations voisines de Mc 5,22.33. G. THEISSEN, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten. Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien* (StNT 8; Gütersloh 1974) 63, fait de ce geste un des motifs des récits de miracles.

¹⁷ Cf., par ex., FOCANT, "Mc 7,24-31", 62-63, qui propose même une disposition chiasmatique basée sur plusieurs parallélismes lexicaux:

v. 25 ἐλθοῦσα

v. 26 τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτῆς

v. 27 κυνάρια

v. 28 κυνάρια

v. 29 ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς σου τὸ δαιμόνιον

v. 30 ἀπελθοῦσα

N'oublions pas toutefois qu'une inclusion n'est pas ce qui permet de fixer les limites d'une péricope, mais une fois les limites mises en évidence à l'aide d'autres critères, ce qui confirme l'unité littéraire par le vocabulaire. Or, au niveau narratif, le v.31 commence manifestement un nouvel épisode.

Avant d'énoncer les difficultés auxquelles est confrontée l'approche narrative, sans doute convient-il de décrire brièvement l'intrigue de situation (ou de résolution). Comme on le sait, la composition d'un épisode narratif ne peut efficacement être déterminée qu'à l'aide de l'intrigue, qui en est la colonne vertébrale. Quelle est-elle donc en ce passage? Après la présentation des protagonistes (vv. 24-26a), vient le nouement ou *inciting moment* (vv. 27-28), qui consiste en une demande de la femme, en style indirect (v. 26b) ; la complication se développe avec la réponse négative de Jésus, en style direct (v. 27) et la répartie de la femme (v. 28); le dénouement arrive avec l'exaucement de la demande par Jésus, au v. 29, et l'épisode finit avec la constatation de la guérison de la petite fille (v. 30).

En Mc 7,24-30, l'intrigue progresse comme en d'autres épisodes marciens de miracle et d'exorcisme où l'action miraculeuse n'est pas soulignée. En effet, en plusieurs de ces récits, l'insistance est mise sur la ou les complications antérieures à l'agir salvifique de Jésus: un événement ¹⁸, une foule trop dense ¹⁹, la réaction de Jésus ²⁰ ou de ceux qui l'entourent ²¹, retardent le miracle et requièrent de celles et ceux qui veulent être guéris ou délivrés de leur misère une durable obstination, comme on l'a justement dit ²². Bref, Mc insiste plus que Matthieu et Luc sur les oppositions ou les contrariétés qui mettent les suppliants à l'épreuve et manifestent ainsi la force de leur foi, et Mc 7,24-30 en est un bon exemple.

L'intrigue ayant été brièvement décrite en ses composantes principales, il est maintenant possible d'examiner quelques-unes de ses bizarreries.

Si ces parallélismes sont réels, ils concernent la forme de l'expression du passage, mais ne disent évidemment rien de la progression de son intrigue et sont inutiles si on ne voit pas leur fonction narrative respective.

¹⁸ Mc 5,23-36 (la guérison de la femme qui perd son sang).

¹⁹ Mc 2,1-10.

²⁰ Mc 4,37-38 (Jésus dort); 6,36-39; 6,48; 7,27; 8,2-5.

²¹ Mc 10,48.

²² DOWNING, "The Woman from Syrophenicia", 23.

1. *Jésus incognito en territoire païen (v. 24)*

Si, nous l'avons vu, il n'est pas de soi impossible que Jésus soit allé loger chez des païens, étant donné le principe qu'il a lui-même énoncé en Mc 7,15, la manière dont il va répondre à la Syrophénicienne semble néanmoins favoriser une hospitalité israélite. Mais que le propriétaire de la maison soit israélite ou phénicien, la raison pour laquelle le récit dit que Jésus entra dans une maison est fournie par le syntagme suivant: s'il se trouve dans une maison et non sur la place publique, c'est parce qu'il veut que personne ne sache qu'il est là. Le meilleur moyen pour rester incognito est effectivement (1) de ne pas se montrer, (2) de loger chez un israélite, qui n'ira vraisemblablement pas dire aux païens qu'il héberge un thaumaturge connu et reconnu en Galilée.

Mais pourquoi Jésus veut-il qu'on ignore sa présence? Cette question en appelle une autre, préalable: pourquoi est-il allé chez les païens? La thématique développée au cours de la controverse précédente, sur le pur et l'impur, permet d'esquisser une réponse. La déclaration de Mc 7,15 et le commentaire qui l'accompagne (7,17-23) affirment en effet qu'on ne peut/doit pas juger de l'impureté de quelqu'un sur les apparences, et que personne ne peut en conséquence être déclaré impur pour des raisons physiques (incirconcision) et/ou externes (règles de pureté). En se rendant immédiatement après en territoire païen, dans les environs de Tyr, Jésus signifie par sa présence, aussi anonyme soit-elle, qu'il faut appliquer ses propos aux païens eux-mêmes. Il s'y rend de sa propre initiative: personne ne l'a forcé ni invité. S'il est donc allé dans les environs de Tyr pour montrer que les païens ne sont pas nécessairement impurs, pourquoi refuse-t-il de libérer une petite fille habitée par un esprit impur (πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον)? Qu'en est-il alors de la cohérence du Jésus et du récit marciens?

2. *Une contradiction?*

Plus que la cohérence de l'épisode, c'est celle de Mc 7,1-30 et des épisodes précédents qui semble alors s'évaporer, et pour au moins deux raisons. (1) La petite fille n'est pas atteinte d'une maladie ou impureté physique mais souffre d'un mal bien plus grave, celui d'être possédée par un πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον, et le Jésus de Mc a jusqu'alors montré vouloir délivrer celles et ceux qui sont prison-

niers des démons ²³. (2) S'il ne veut pas que les païens viennent à lui pour être libérés des esprits mauvais et de leurs maladies, pourquoi s'est-il rendu en leur territoire? Uniquement pour leur faire savoir que le salut n'est pas encore pour eux? Mais cela serait de la provocation! Jésus serait aussi en contradiction avec lui-même, car il a libéré l'homme possédé de Mc 5,1-20 ²⁴, païen lui aussi, sans objecter que le temps n'était pas encore venu. Les deux épisodes seraient alors en opposition directe, car en Mc 5,19-20 Jésus envoie l'homme proclamer aux siens (les païens) la miséricorde de Dieu à son égard et fait de lui le premier héraut de la Bonne Nouvelle aux païens, celle d'une libération et d'un salut déjà à l'œuvre pour eux et chez eux. Les propos de Mc 5,19-20 ne permettent pas d'affirmer que Jésus "n'avait pas l'intention de se donner à connaître en dehors d'Israël" ²⁵. On répondra peut-être que les Geraséniens lui avaient demandé de quitter leur territoire (Mc 5,17), et que s'il réagit de la sorte en Mc 7,27, c'est à cause de ce refus païen antérieur. Mais la difficulté demeure: lui fallait-il aller chez les païens pour leur signifier le refus qu'il avait de les libérer *in illo tempore*? En bref, il faudra choisir entre deux interprétations: (1) Jésus n'est pas allé en pays païen pour y signifier en acte la délivrance et le salut de Dieu, mais il faut alors expliquer pourquoi il se trouve là et quel est le rapport de Mc 7,24-30 à Mc 7,15-19; (2) Jésus est venu chez les païens pour leur annoncer que Dieu pense aussi à eux et veut leur salut, mais il faut alors rendre compte de l'anonymat dans lequel il a voulu rester.

3. *Un paradoxe récurrent*

La volonté d'anonymat de Jésus et son incapacité à le conserver ont intrigué depuis longtemps les exégètes (et pas seulement les narratologues). La plupart y voient un motif présent dès le début du récit marcen: Jésus ne veut pas que soient diffusés les exorcismes et guérisons qu'il opère, il exige le silence de ceux qu'il délivre de

²³ Mc 3,22 et 6,13.

²⁴ Mc 5,2 ἀνθρώπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ.

²⁵ Je reprends ici ce qu'en "Mc 7,24-31", 52, Focant dit à propos de Mc 7,24sq, "Mc insiste sur le fait que, méconnu chez les siens à qui il voulait révéler le Royaume, Jésus est reconnu aussitôt par une païenne, alors même qu'il n'avait pas l'intention de se donner à connaître en dehors d'Israël". L'affirmation devrait valoir aussi pour Mc 5, ce qui n'est pourtant pas le cas.

leur mal, mais ces derniers lui désobéissent et racontent alentour ce qu'il fit pour eux ²⁶. On a associé ce double mouvement — volonté de discrétion de Jésus et diffusion de sa renommée — à la thématique marcienne du secret messianique ²⁷. Qu'on accepte ou non cette dernière hypothèse, il faut reconnaître que si Jésus fuit les foules qui le suivent pour être guéries de leurs misères, c'est parce qu'il refuse un messianisme facile. Le paradoxe est néanmoins bien souligné par Mc: si Jésus guérit, ce n'est pas pour séduire et être adulé, mais pour signifier qu'il est venu délivrer du pouvoir du péché celles et ceux qui viennent à lui ²⁸, et néanmoins, les miracles sont opérés pour qu'on puisse le reconnaître comme prophète ²⁹, mieux: comme Christ ³⁰.

On ne devrait donc pas s'étonner de voir Jésus adopter en pays païen l'attitude qui fut la sienne depuis le début de son ministère en Galilée. Il se comporte au milieu des païens comme il le fit, anonyme, au milieu des pécheurs qui venaient à Jean pour un baptême de pénitence. Et l'on ne doit pas davantage s'étonner de voir qu'il ne peut rester caché. Les informations fournies auparavant permettent de se rappeler qu'il était aussi renommé parmi les païens: "Une grande multitude venue de la Galilée le suivit. Et de la Judée, de Jérusalem, de l'Idumée, d'au-delà du Jourdain, *du pays de Tyr et Sidon*, une grande multitude vint à lui, à la nouvelle de tout ce qu'il faisait" (Mc 3,7-8; je souligne). Étant connu en ces régions, il pouvait difficilement y rester longtemps dans l'anonymat.

Cela dit, si le narrateur ajoute que Jésus "ne pouvait rester caché" (v. 24), c'est pour préparer le verset suivant: *la preuve qu'il en fut ainsi*, c'est qu'une femme ayant entendu dire qu'il était là, vint le trouver. La lecture fournie est *ad sensum*. Car, si le v. 25 se rapporte à la dernière proposition du v. 24 — normalement en grec, la conjonction de coordination *ἀλλά* suit une négation — il ne saurait pourtant y avoir d'opposition entre la dernière proposition du v. 24, "il ne pouvait rester

²⁶ Cf. Mc 1,44-45 et 7,36. Sur les injonctions au silence chez Mc et sur le paradoxe à peine énoncé, voir l'étude fine et fouillée de S. de VULPILLIÈRES, *Nature et fonction des injonctions au silence dans l'évangile de Marc* (EB NS 62; Paris 2010), en particulier les pp. 141-316.

²⁷ BAUDOZ, *Les miettes*, 110: "nous retrouvons ici le double mouvement qui affecte ce thème du secret messianique dans le deuxième évangile."

²⁸ Mc 2,5.10; voir aussi 2,17.

²⁹ Mc 6,15 et 8,28.

³⁰ Mc 8,29.

caché”, et le “aussitôt qu’elle entendit parler de lui, ...” du début du v. 25. Il devrait plutôt y avoir un γάπ³¹: “il ne pouvait rester caché; en effet, aussitôt qu’elle entendit parler de lui ...” S’il y a opposition, c’est entre de la proposition négative précédente du v. 24 et le v. 25: “il voulait que personne ne sût [qu’il était là], mais une femme ...”³². Le grec des vv. 24-25 n’étant ni des plus clairs ni des plus corrects, il est possible, si l’on relie le v. 25 à la dernière proposition du v. 24, d’interpréter leur lien, comme nous l’avons fait, *ad sensum*, ou bien de voir dans cette dernière proposition une incise faite pour rappeler le paradoxe marcieu — discrétion/renommée —, et de rattacher le v. 25 à la proposition précédente: “il voulait que personne ne le sût — et il ne pouvait rester caché — mais dès qu’elle entendit parler de lui ...” Mais la logique est alors mise à mal, voilà pourquoi la première lecture est ici préférée. À dire vrai, quel que soit le choix opéré, il est clair que la fin du v. 24 a pour fonction de préparer l’arrivée de la Syrophénicienne. Et c’est le dialogue entre cette femme et Jésus qu’on va désormais examiner.

Rappelons le résultat auquel nous sommes parvenus. Lire Mc 7,24-30 en relation à l’épisode précédent et comme une application du principe énoncé en 7,15sq implique, sous peine de contradiction, que Jésus soit allé chez les païens pour leur annoncer que Dieu ne les a pas oubliés et veut leur salut³³. Cette interprétation exigeait qu’on rendit alors compte de l’anonymat dans lequel Jésus voulait rester, ce qui a été fait grâce au paradoxe marcieu discrétion/renommée. Mais il reste encore à voir si Jésus, arrivé en territoire païen pour appliquer le principe énoncé par lui en 7,15sq, opposa vraiment à la Syrophénicienne une fin de non-recevoir.

³¹ Cf. BAUDOUZ, *Les miettes*, 139.

³² Cf. BAUDOUZ, *Les miettes*, 140: “Jésus veut rester ignoré, mais une femme ayant entendu parler de lui, se jette à ses pieds”.

³³ E. STRUTHERS MALBON, “Fallible Followers. Women and Men in the Gospel of Mark”, *Semeia* 28 (1983) 37, signale aussi que la présence de Jésus dans les environs de Tyr contredit le principe énoncé au v. 27b: “[A]lthough Jesus’ presence in the Gentile region of Tyre (7:24) undermines his statement that ‘it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs’ (7:27), the Syrophoenician woman’s clever reply to Jesus’ saying is presented as convincing him to change his mind (7:29)”. Jésus dirait donc grosso modo ceci: “Je viens chez vous, mais n’attendez rien de moi!” Pourquoi est-il donc venu?

III. Un refus et une mise à l'épreuve

Pour une grande majorité de commentateurs, au v. 27, Jésus rejette dans un premier temps la demande de la Syrophénicienne, et change ensuite d'avis devant sa foi, son intelligence et son obstination³⁴. Nous avons déjà interrogé la pertinence de cette interprétation, car elle ne tient pas compte de la progression de la séquence Mc 7,1–8,10. Nombreux sont en effet ceux pour qui le narrateur marcieen a bien mis en série les épisodes qui vont de 7,24 à 8,10 et se déroulent hors des confins de Galilée. Mais ils oublient Mc 7,1-23. Si le narrateur a en effet lié la controverse sur le pur et l'impur (7,1-23) et l'agir de Jésus en pays païen (7,24–8,10), c'est bien parce que, pour Jésus, les païens ne sont pas impurs et qu'il va chez eux pour le leur faire savoir. Voilà pourquoi une autre lecture du dialogue entre Jésus et la femme sera ici proposée: le refus de Jésus au v. 27 est en réalité une mise à l'épreuve de la femme. C'est ce qu'il faut maintenant montrer, d'abord par une analyse du v. 27.

1. *πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα* (v. 27a)

τὰ τέκνα (v.27a). L'expression désigne les israélites³⁵. L'énoncé n'est pas sans rappeler la préséance donnée par Paul au Ἰουδαῖος en Rm 1,16, ou par le livre des Actes, en 13,46, mais il semble en contradiction avec un autre passage de Mc³⁶, et surtout avec le deuxième principe énoncé en 27b, comme on va maintenant le constater³⁷.

³⁴ Citons seulement ici deux opinions représentatives, celle de BAUDOZ, *Les miettes*, 321, pour qui "Un Jésus réticent à l'endroit des païens, s'ouvre à eux grâce à une non-juive. C'est en effet parce qu'elle prend Jésus à son propre piège que la femme a droit aux miettes", et celle d'ALONSO, *The Woman*, 327: "After giving the bread to the children, Jesus is challenged by a Syrophoenician woman and changes his approach. He starts to seek those who are in exile, to heal and feed everybody". Également, Sonnet, "Réflecteurs et/ou catalyseurs du Messie", 372.

³⁵ Cf. Is 30,1; 63,8; Jer 3,19; Os 11,1.

³⁶ Cf. Mc 13,10: εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη πρῶτον δεῖ κηρυχθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον.

³⁷ Cf. BAUDOZ, *Les miettes*, 266.

2. οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν καλὸν λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων (v. 27b)

La contradiction a déjà été clairement décrite: “If the children go first and the dogs may follow, why comes later a prohibition? Or, conversely, if the dogs have no right, why does the text say ‘first the children’?”³⁸ Le v. 27a ne dit pas en effet que les païens ne doivent pas avoir accès aux bienfaits accordés aux Israélites, mais qu’ils les obtiendront *après eux*, alors que le v. 27b raisonne par exclusion: les dons offerts aux israélites ne doivent pas l’être aux païens. Pour rétablir la cohérence originelle du *logion*, certains commentateurs pensent que le *πρῶτον* reflète la situation de l’Église primitive, lorsque de nombreux païens adhèrent à l’Évangile, que l’adverbe aurait donc été ajouté par la tradition antérieure ou par le narrateur lui-même³⁹. Si l’analyse narrative n’a pas à se prononcer sur ce sujet, elle doit néanmoins affronter la question de la cohérence du v. 27. Il existe sans aucun doute une tension entre 27a et 27b, mais, le premier principe énoncé en 27a relativise le deuxième; c’est parce que, selon les traditions juives, les païens n’ont aucun droit, que Jésus leur demande d’attendre que les israélites soient “rassasiés”. Si Jésus n’avait mentionné que le deuxième principe, il reprenait à son compte l’idée que les païens ne devaient pas se substituer aux israélites et recevoir des bienfaits qui leur étaient destinés, bref, qu’ils ne devaient pas les léser. Voilà pourquoi le verbe *χορτασθῆναι* (“être rassasié”, “être pleinement rassasié”) est ici de la plus grande importance, car il laisse entendre que les païens ne léseront en rien des israélites “déjà rassasiés”. En effet, s’il n’est pas bon de jeter le pain des enfants aux chiens, en revanche, une fois les enfants rassasiés, les chiens peuvent avoir les restes. C’est d’ailleurs ainsi que la femme a compris le rapport des deux principes utilisés par Jésus.

3. τοῖς κυναρίοις βαλεῖν (v. 27b)

En ce verset métaphorique, les chiots ou les petits chiens désignent les païens, tous ceux qui n’appartiennent pas au peuple d’Israël. Si, selon l’un ou l’autre témoignage ancien⁴⁰, l’appellatif

³⁸ Ainsi ALONSO, *The Woman*, 189, résume-t-il l’opinion de Baudoz.

³⁹ Cf., par ex., BAUDOUZ, *Les miettes*, 276, pour qui l’adverbe est rédactionnel.

⁴⁰ 1Enoch 89:42 et 46-49, texte également métaphorique, est cité par les commentateurs. ALONSO, *The woman*, 175, mentionne le témoignage plus

chiens (κύνες) s'appliquait par ailleurs aux païens, ennemis d'Israël et impurs, le diminutif de κύων, κυνάριον a-t-il la même dénotation péjorative? Comme il se rencontre seulement en Mc 7,27-28 et dans le passage parallèle, Mt 15,26-27, il est impossible d'arriver à des certitudes par le seul examen du vocable. Cela dit, dans le grec de la koinè les diminutifs sont beaucoup plus nombreux que dans le grec classique ; la Bible grecque et le NT témoignent de cette tendance ⁴¹. Mais, bien des diminutifs n'étaient plus perçus comme tels. En est-il ainsi pour le κυνάρια de Mc 7,27-28? Autrement dit, κυνάρια équivaut-il à κύνες? La réponse est négative, car s'il y a un diminutif au v. 27, c'est parce qu'il y en a déjà un au v. 24 ⁴²: à la 'petite fille' correspondent les "petits chiens". Soit dit en passant, le passage est cohérent dans l'usage qu'il fait du vocabulaire : une petite fille est seulement un κυνάριον, ce terme ayant aussi une connotation domestique.⁴³ Le verset ne fait donc pas allusion aux chiens errants, impurs parce que se nourrissant de toutes sortes de carcasses d'animaux eux-mêmes impurs, et auxquels on doit, pour ne pas contacter d'impureté, lancer de loin ce qui reste des repas. C'est un autre lieu commun qui est ici repris, celui des chiens domestiques nourris autour de la table. Le diminutif a bien valeur de diminutif et tempère le principe de référence énoncé au v. 27b. On peut aussi ajouter que le choix de κυνάρια, et non de κύνες, invite à ne pas interpréter le texte à partir de l'arrière-fond cynique ⁴⁴.

tardif, de *Pirké Rabbi Eliezer*, 29, de l'époque des Tannaim (et peut-être après s'il s'agit d'un écrit pseudépigraphe, comme le soutiennent certains), mais tout aussi pertinent, cité ici d'après l'édition de G. FRIEDLANDER, *Pirké de Rabbi Eliezer*. The chapter of Rabbi Eliezer the great according to the text of the manuscript belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna (New York 1971) 208, n. 5 (the first editions read): "He who eats with an idolater is as though he were eating with a dog. Just as the dog is uncircumcised, so the uncircumcised person is not circumcised".

⁴¹ Cf. K. ELLIOTT, "Nouns with Diminutive Endings in the New Testament" *NT* 12 (1970) 391-398. Pour les seuls diminutifs en -αριον, en plus de κυνάριον, mentionnons, par ex., ὀνάριον (ânon) Jn 12,14; παιδάριον (enfant) Jn 6,9; πλοίαριον (petite barque) Mc 3,9; John 6,22.24; 21,8; ὠτάριον (petite oreille) Mc 14,47; Jn 18,10. Également, μοσχάριον (veau) qui n'apparaît pas dans le NT mais en Gn 18,7s; Ex 24,5; etc.

⁴² La fillette sera désignée par un autre diminutif en fin d'épisode: τὸ παιδίον (v.30).

⁴³ Cf. BAUDOUZ, *Les miettes*, 263.

⁴⁴ Comme le fait DOWNING, "The Woman from Syrophoenicia".

À quels résultats sommes-nous arrivés? (1) S'il est vrai que Jésus exprime un refus, il faut immédiatement ajouter qu'il est provisoire. Pour formuler un refus définitif, le deuxième principe, celui du v. 27b, οὐ καλὸν λαβεῖν etc., aurait suffi, et Jésus aurait alors signifié qu'il partageait l'opinion de ses coreligionnaires sur les païens. (2) La désignation métaphorique de la petite fille et, avec elle, des païens, par un diminutif qui garde ici son sens, indique aussi qu'il ne les considère pas comme impurs, et confirme les propos qu'il tint en 7,15sq. Les mots de Jésus sont bien choisis. Mais pourquoi répond-il métaphoriquement?

4. La fonction de la métaphorisation (vv. 27-28)

Le décalage entre la demande de la femme et la réponse de Jésus est relevé par (presque) tous les commentateurs, qui s'interrogent sur la pertinence du champ sémantique choisi par Jésus pour répondre: la femme le supplie de délivrer sa fille d'un démon impur, et il répond avec une métaphore sur la nourriture! Ils notent heureusement que l'épisode se situe dans la section des pains et que Jésus utilise un champ sémantique qui trouvera sa pleine raison d'être en Mc 8,1-10: Jésus lui-même rassasiera de pains les païens comme il le fit pour les enfants; le verbe χορτάζω, repris en 8,4.8 fait évidemment écho à 7,27, mais aussi à 6,42, la première multiplication des pains. Le champ sémantique n'a donc rien d'inopportun, et, étant donné la progression de la section, il faut être aveugle pour croire que le Jésus de Mc l'a utilisé par hasard ...

Que Jésus se soit adressé à une païenne métaphoriquement ne devrait d'ailleurs étonner que les lecteurs ayant oublié ce que le narrateur maricien leur a dit à la fin du discours parabolique: "Par de nombreuses paraboles de ce genre, il leur annonçait la Parole, dans la mesure où ils étaient capables de l'entendre" (Mc 4,33). Si la métaphore est le langage que Jésus utilise habituellement pour dire les mystères du Royaume au tout-venant, on comprend qu'il fasse de même en cet épisode, s'il est vrai que les relations Israël/Nations sont au cœur du mystère des voies de Dieu.

En outre, la métaphore donne à entendre, suggère, sans s'imposer, et s'en remet à la compréhension et à l'intelligence de ceux à qui elle est proposée: Jésus a choisi un champ sémantique qui pouvait être compris de la Syrophénicienne et qui l'a au demeurant été. Cette dernière a bien vu que les israélites étaient les enfants et les païens, les

petits chiens, que les petits chiens, bien qu'étant des animaux domestiques, ne faisaient pas partie de la famille et n'avaient aucun droit, sinon celui de se nourrir des restes. Elle répond en utilisant la même métaphore, mais en la modifiant "temporellement". Jésus lui avait dit *grosso modo* ceci: "Vous, les chiots, attendez la fin du repas, que les enfants soient repus"; elle répond: "mais, les chiots n'attendent pas, ils prennent tout ce qui tombe de la table tout au long du repas, et personne dans la famille les en empêche"⁴⁵. Bref, loin de paralyser la Syrophénicienne, la métaphore utilisée par Jésus lui a permis de répondre qu'un secours "immédiat" ne lèserait en rien les israélites. Pourquoi remettre à "plus tard", si cela est possible "maintenant"?

La question à laquelle l'analyse narrative doit alors répondre est la suivante: la Syrophénicienne a-t-elle aidé Jésus à envisager une solution à laquelle il ne pensait pas? Lui a-t-elle permis d'ouvrir l'horizon de son messianisme? Ou bien Jésus voulait-il seulement la mettre à l'épreuve et sonder la force de son désir, lui permettant de dire qu'elle voulait absolument le salut de sa petite fille? Une réponse narrative doit revenir au début du macro-récit et voir comment Marc a jusque-là construit le personnage Jésus.

5. *Jésus et ceux qui le cherchent ou l'invoquent*

Ce n'est pas la première fois, en Mc 7,24-30, que Jésus met à l'épreuve ceux qui viennent à lui pour être guéris. Chez les siens, en Galilée, de façon répétée, il fuit les foules qui doivent faire de longs trajets à pied pour le rejoindre, dès qu'elles savent où il s'est rendu⁴⁶. Trop connu dans les villes et les villages, il s'en va dans les lieux déserts, où l'on finit par le retrouver. Les disciples doivent eux aussi le chercher et ne comprennent pas pourquoi il fait parcourir la région en tous sens à ces gens qui ont tellement besoin de soulagement. Il y a du reproche dans l'observation qu'ils lui adressent: "Tout le monde te cherche!" (Mc 1,37) Le comportement de Jésus n'oblige pas seulement à être patients ceux qui s'en remettent à lui, il permet de sou-

⁴⁵ Ce qu'a bien vu BAUDOZ, *Les miettes*, 300: "[A]u schéma temporel proposé par Jésus (τὰ τέκνα ... πρῶτον), elle oppose un double schéma: celui de la simultanéité et celui de la spatialité; non plus les uns d'abord et les autres ensuite, mais les uns et les autres en même temps, les uns étant à table et les autres étant sous la table".

⁴⁶ Cf. Mc 1,35-38; 1,45; 3,7; 6,32-34; 6,54-55.

ligner (1) le besoin et la déréliction dans laquelle ils se trouvent: l'enjeu est de taille pour qui souffre et n'a trouvé jusque-là personne susceptible de le soulager; (2) la foi qu'ils ont en sa puissance — ils font tout pour rejoindre celui dont ils sont sûrs qu'il va les délivrer et sauver.

Mc 6,47-52, un épisode qui précède de peu la controverse sur le pur/impur et le voyage au pays de Tyr, est lui aussi typique de la manière dont Jésus connaît les êtres et les rejoint. Après la multiplication des pains, il oblige ses disciples à traverser le lac et à l'attendre sur l'autre rive, pendant que lui-même, seul, va prier toute la nuit. Or, nous dit le narrateur, il voit ses disciples peiner, s'épuiser à lutter contre le vent, et ne va vers eux qu'au petit matin — “aux environs de la quatrième veille de la nuit il alla vers eux, en marchant sur la mer” (Mc 6,48). Jésus voit, sait, et pourtant diffère le moment d'aller les soulager. On exclura évidemment toute trace de sadisme, car le narrateur a auparavant relaté que Jésus se préoccupe de la santé de ses disciples et les emmène à l'écart pour leur permettre de se reposer (6,31). Des diverses explications fournies par les commentateurs, retenons la plus vraisemblable: les disciples doivent comprendre que, même physiquement absent, Jésus veille sur eux et qu'ils n'ont plus à avoir peur; la multiplication des pains a montré qu'il peut rassasier une multitude avec presque rien: maître des éléments et plein de sollicitude pour les foules, n'aurait-il donc pas cure de ceux qu'il a choisis? Si le narrateur a tenu à signaler à ses lecteurs la connaissance que Jésus a des êtres et des situations, c'est bien pour leur indiquer que Jésus ne change pas d'avis au hasard des rencontres et qu'il accomplit son ministère comme il l'entend. On peut donc raisonnablement supposer qu'il en est de même lorsqu'il va en pays païen et lorsque la Syrophénicienne le supplie de délivrer son enfant du démon impur qui la tourmente. Il y va de la cohérence du récit de Mc. Voilà pourquoi, le respect de la logique narrative invite à interpréter le refus de Jésus en 7,27 comme une mise à l'épreuve de la Syrophénicienne ⁴⁷: les éléments relevés dans ce paragraphe et les précédents vont dans le même sens.

⁴⁷ La volonté de rester caché et le refus doivent donc être interprétés en fonction du comportement de Jésus depuis le début du macro-récit. Voilà pourquoi, *pace* FOCANT, “Mc 7,24-31”, 52, on ne peut dire que la guérison a été extorquée par la Syrophénicienne.

IV. Jésus en Mc 7,24–8,10

Les exégètes signalent que Mc 7,24-30 fait partie d'une section — celle des pains — centrée sur la recherche et, par là, sur la révélation progressive de l'identité de Jésus ⁴⁸. Mc 7,24-30 est-il donc centré sur Jésus et son identité ou sur le personnage de la Syrophénicienne?

1. *Kόπιε en Mc 7,28*

De l'avis de certains commentateurs, l'épisode insiste sur la Syrophénicienne, sur sa foi, son intelligence et sa ténacité. Pareille lecture peut se recommander de la parole finale de Jésus, au v. 29: "À cause de cette parole, va, le démon est sorti de ta fille". Même si c'est lui qui a chassé le démon, il ne le dit pas; il attribue la guérison à la déclaration de la femme (v.28) : c'est parce qu'elle a ainsi répondu que le démon s'en est allé. Parole de foi, manifestement, même si, à la différence du passage parallèle en Mt ⁴⁹, et de ce qu'il déclara à l'hémorroïsse en 5,34, Jésus ne mentionne pas la foi en cet épisode. Si Jésus dit à l'hémorroïsse que sa foi l'a sauvée, c'est parce que le narrateur relate ses paroles en style indirect, et que Jésus ne peut lui déclarer: "À cause de cette parole ..." En soulignant la parole de la Syrophénicienne, Marc invite évidemment le lecteur à méditer sur l'énoncé du v. 28 pour y trouver les raisons du miracle. Car, par sa réponse métaphorique, la femme ne fait aucunement pression sur Jésus; elle ne dit pas que les enfants (et Jésus avec eux) doivent jeter le pain aux petits chiens, mais laisse entendre que les miettes et les restes tombent d'eux-mêmes sous la table. En rassasiant les enfants, Jésus tout naturellement, et sans qu'il y soit forcé, peut ainsi nourrir les petits chiens. La Syrophénicienne ne saurait mieux dire: le narrateur n'a-t-il pas mentionné les douze paniers qui restaient de la première multiplication, celle aux enfants, les fils d'Israël (6,43)? Et en disant que les chiots se nourrissent des miettes, la femme exprime un désir où Jésus lit une prophétie: les païens seront nourris du même pain que les israélites (8,1-10).

En réalité, dans leur échange verbal, ni Jésus et ni la Syrophénicienne ne parlent directement d'eux-mêmes, mais d'enfants et de chiots: la métaphore soulève évidemment la question du rapport entre

⁴⁸ Cf., par ex., ALONSO, *The Woman*, 327.

⁴⁹ À l'hémorroïsse, Mat 15,28: *μεγάλη σου ἡ πίστις*.

Israël et les Nations: ces dernières auront-elles part, quand et comment, aux bénédictions accordées au premier? C'est la première fois que le récit marcieen aborde la question, et, qui plus est, en la liant à Jésus et à la finalité de sa mission. L'enjeu du passage est bien celui de savoir si Jésus est le Seigneur de tous et va se manifester comme tel.

Au v. 28, la Syrophénicienne apostrophe Jésus en l'appelant Κύριε. Comme c'est la seule fois où, en Mc, quelqu'un s'adresse à Jésus en utilisant ce vocable, certains pensent qu'on doit y voir un titre fort et que la femme s'adresse en croyante à celui qui est le Seigneur d'Israël et le sien; pour d'autres, au contraire, l'appellatif serait banal⁵⁰. Pour fournir une réponse sûre, il importe de voir d'abord comment, en Mc, ceux qui demandent à Jésus de les sauver s'adressent à lui. Or, aucun des personnages secondaires des précédents récits de miracle marciens ne lui donne un titre: tous formulent leur demande sans rien ajouter⁵¹. La Syrophénicienne est la première à le faire. Certes, elle n'est pas la seule, car deux autres la suivront, mais avec des titres que des israélites pouvaient prononcer, διδάσκαλε en 9,17, et υἱὲ Δαυὶδ en 10,47. La femme ne dit pas διδάσκαλε car Jésus n'est pas allé enseigner chez les païens; elle ne lui donne pas le titre messianique υἱὲ Δαυὶδ, car elle vient d'admettre qu'elle ne fait pas partie des enfants, de ceux dont Jésus est le Messie⁵². Mais Κύριε peut être dit par un non israélite, et la femme voit manifestement en Jésus un thaumaturge assez puissant

⁵⁰ S'appuyant sur le fait qu'aucune des personnes demandant à Jésus de faire un miracle ne l'appelle Κύριε, BAUDOUZ, *Les miettes*, 288-289, en conclut que ce titre est pré-marcien. C'est possible, mais pas certain, car le narrateur a pu mettre en contraste les récits de miracle et d'exorcisme précédents avec celui-ci.

⁵¹ Cf. Mc 1,40; 2,5; 3,1-6; 5,23. Seuls les démons donnent un titre à Jésus, en 1,24 et 5,7. On ne saurait ranger 4,38 dans cette liste, car le titre διδάσκαλε y est prononcé par les disciples en péril, et ils sont des personnages majeurs du macro-récit.

⁵² Comme on le sait, les exégètes ne sont pas d'accord sur la portée du titre υἱὲ Δαυὶδ. Pour certains, il a une signification messianique qui est acceptée par le narrateur et par Jésus lui-même, alors que pour d'autres il manifeste une incompréhension de la véritable identité de Jésus. Cf. E. STRUTHERS MALBON, *Mark's Jesus. Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, TX 2009) 90: "Although the narrative does not make clear at the story level just what Bartimaeus means by the term, when Bartimaeus uses it (10:47-48), Jesus seems to ignore it; when Jesus uses it later he seems to do so to dispute the idea that the Messiah could be the son of David (12:35-37)." En réalité, Jésus ne refuse pas le titre en Mc 12, mais il va au-delà d'une lecture seulement généalogique et temporelle.

pour lui donner ce titre. Comment donc savoir si en Mc 7,28 elle donne à Κύριε ce sens fort?

Notons qu'avant de dire Κύριε à Jésus, la Syrophénicienne se prosterne devant lui: geste de profond respect indiquant déjà qu'elle ne le considère pas comme un Monsieur-tout-le-Monde, geste sans aucun doute dû à ce qui se disait de Jésus et devait être plus que flatteur; la femme voit en lui un thaumaturge dont la renommée est due à la puissance. Le titre Κύριε n'est prononcé qu'après la réponse négative de Jésus, dont le champ métaphorique peut donner à entendre qu'il est un *paterfamilias*, alors qu'elle-même n'est qu'un petit chien dépendant de son bon vouloir: la différence de statut justifie elle aussi le titre. En l'appelant Κύριε, la Syrophénicienne signifie enfin qu'elle lui laisse l'initiative, qu'elle ne veut pas le forcer, car c'est lui le Seigneur, le Κύριος. Bref, ce titre n'a rien d'une désignation banale. Cela ne signifie pourtant pas qu'il soit ici chargé de tous les traits grâce auxquels Jésus sera déclaré tel après sa résurrection.

2. *L'acclamation de Mc 7,37*

Il n'est pas question d'analyser ici, même succinctement, l'épisode de la guérison du sourd-muet⁵³, seulement de signaler en finissant la progression christologique qui se dessine de Mc 7,24-30 à 7,31-37. Les commentateurs le notent avec raison, le groupe qui a assisté à la guérison exprime sa louange en citant Is 35,5-6⁵⁴: le salut de Dieu est déjà là, puisque le signe opéré le manifeste. Est-il possible que des païens connaissent les Écritures? Ce que la reprise d'Isaïe donne à entendre, c'est que les païens rejoignent la foi et la louange d'Israël, qu'ils sont les premiers en Mc à dire cette foi exprimée autrefois par le prophète. Il y a plus ici, c'est de Jésus qu'il s'agit, car ils reconnaissent en lui le salut de Dieu venu à eux.

⁵³ Sur la fonction de cet épisode en Mc, où se trouve, en style indirect, une injonction au silence (désobéie), voir de VULPILLIÈRES, *Nature et fonction des injonctions au silence*, 219-230.

⁵⁴ Mc 7,37: καλῶς πάντα πεποίηκεν, καὶ τοὺς κωφοὺς ποιεῖ ἀκούειν καὶ [τοὺς] ἀλάλους λαλεῖν. Is 35:5-6 : τότε ἀνοιχθήσονται ὀφθαλμοὶ τυφλῶν καὶ ὅτα κωφῶν ἀκούσονται. τότε ἀλεῖται ὡς ἔλαφος ὁ χωλὸς καὶ τρανὴ ἔσται γλῶσσα μογιλάων. Dans les Écritures, le vocable μογιλάος n'est utilisé qu'en Is 35,6 et Mc 7,32.

La progression de la séquence 7,24-37 peut ainsi être décrite:

Mc 7,24-30	Jésus libère une fillette d'un démon impur	dans une maison une seule personne	Jésus nommé Seigneur
Mc 7,31-37	Jésus libère la parole d'un homme	dehors un groupe	louange à Jésus Sauveur

Et comme ces païens confessent Dieu avec une foi semblable à celle d'Israël, ils vont tous — les quatre mille représentent une totalité — être rassasiés par le même don eschatologique, symbolisé par la multiplication des pains (Mc 8,1-10) ⁵⁵.

* *
*

On sentait venir ces dernières années un consensus dans l'interprétation de Mc 7,24-30. Une Syrophénicienne avait réussi à obtenir de Jésus qu'il ouvrit l'horizon de sa mission aux païens, alors que lui-même avait exclu cette éventualité. Il a semblé nécessaire de revisiter cette interprétation et de montrer qu'elle ne tient pas compte de l'ensemble de données textuelles — celles du passage, celles de son contexte immédiat et celles du macro-récit marcen. On ne peut en effet interpréter Mc 7,24-8,10 sans la discussion sur le pur et l'impur (7,1-23) qui lui donne sens et prépare le voyage de Jésus en terre païenne. Pour la même raison, il a semblé improbable de voir en Mc 7,24-30 un changement radical dans le projet missionnaire de Jésus. En cet épisode, la Syrophénicienne n'extorque pas un miracle, car c'est en la mettant à l'épreuve que Jésus en reçoit une réponse grâce à laquelle il va pouvoir manifester la puissance salvifique de Dieu chez les païens et être confessé comme celui par qui le salut de Dieu advient.

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⁵⁵ Les disciples qui ne sont pas mentionnés en Mc 7,24-37, le sont de nouveau en 8,1-10, pour distribuer le pain à la foule païenne. Le narrateur ne fait donc pas des disciples en cet épisode les destinataires du don de Jésus.

SUMMARY

The thesis developed in the article is that Mark 7,24–8,10 cannot be interpreted without the previous dispute about clean and unclean in 7,1–23 that gives meaning to it and prepares Jesus' journey to the nearby pagan land. For the same reason, it seemed impossible to interpret Mark 7,24–30 as a radical change in Jesus' missionary project. In this episode, the Syrophoenician does not extort a miracle from Jesus. It is rather he who puts her to the test, expecting from her a response that may give him the opportunity to manifest God's power in favor of the Gentiles and be proclaimed as the one through whom God's salvation comes.

Bartimaeus' Faith: Plot and Point of View in Mark 10,46-52

The Bartimaeus episode takes place in Jericho just before the entrance into Jerusalem, at the end of the "section of the way" (Mark 8,27–10,52). The previous episodes show Jesus teaching his disciples and the crowd about his mission and about the need of taking his cross to follow him. Bartimaeus appears at this point as a model of effective accomplishment of Jesus' requirements.

However, scholars do not agree concerning the exact meaning of Bartimaeus' example. What is it that the disciples (and the reader) should learn from him? ¹

Through a narrative analysis of the episode, I intend to show that Bartimaeus is presented as a model of faith in Jesus, which includes both confessing him as Son of David and following him promptly on the way (to the cross).

This thesis opposes the view that "it is in his following Jesus on the way that Bartimaeus is exemplary, not in his initial — and ignored and abandoned — address of Jesus as 'Son of David'" ². According to this interpretation, the title "Son of David" is inadequate, because Bartimaeus uses it while he is still blind, and he begins to follow Jesus only after his healing ³.

In what follows, "Mark" designates the Gospel as a written work, and "narrator" the source from which the narration comes. The narrator speaks directly, through his voice, or indirectly, through the

¹ For a survey of the different interpretations of this passage see R.H. STEIN, *Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI 2008) 491-498.

² E.S. MALBON, *Mark's Jesus*. Characterization as Narrative Christology (Waco, TX 2009) 88; see 87-92; 146-147; and 222-225.

³ In addition to Malbon, see: W.H. KELBER, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time* (Philadelphia, PA 1974) 95; W.L. LANE, *The Gospel according to Mark*. The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes (NICNT 2; Grand Rapids, MI 1974) 387-388; E.S. JOHNSON, "Mark 10:46-52: Blind Bartimaeus", *CBQ* 40 (1978) 191-204, here 197; E. BEST, *Following Jesus*. Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark (JSNTSS 4; Sheffield 1981) 141; D.O. VIA JR., *The Ethics of Mark's Gospel*. In the Middle of Time (Philadelphia, PA 1985) 162; F.J. MOLONEY, *The Gospel of Mark*. A Commentary (Peabody, MA 2002) 209; and M.E. BORING, *Mark*. A Commentary (Louisville, KY 2006) 306.

characters⁴. According to most narrative critics, there is no relevant distance between the narrator and the implied author, and between the narratee and the implied reader/audience in Mark, although these notions are conceptually different⁵.

Among the tools offered by narrative criticism, two will be especially useful: the distinction between a plot of resolution and a plot of revelation, and the analysis of the narrative point of view. As far as I know, no scholar has applied these notions to Bartimaeus' episode. To be sure, some authors have studied the point of view throughout Mark, but none of them has paid attention to this episode in particular⁶.

Before applying these concepts to Mark 10,46-52, a brief explanation of the concept "narrative point of view" is needed.

I. Point of View: Some Preliminary Considerations

The concept of "point of view", also called "narrative perspective" or "focalization", has its origin in a spatial and psychological metaphor. It designates the standpoint of an observer with respect to what he or she observes, and, consequently, it refers also to how he or she sees it and to the distance between them. The observer (or "focus") can be near or far, looking at a wide panoramic or concentrating on a detail, remaining motionless or moving, etc.

⁴ I deal with the narrator as "he" and not "she" only for convention. For the terminology of narrative criticism, see J.L. SKA, "*Our Fathers Have Told Us*". Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives (SubBi 13; Roma 1990); D. MARGUERAT – Y. BOURQUIN, *Pour lire les récits bibliques*. Initiation à l'analyse narrative (Paris 1998).

⁵ Malbon (*Mark's Jesus*) does see a tension between the narrator and the implied author in Mark. For the narrator, Jesus is the Messiah (cf. Mark 1,1), but the position of the author is more complex, since, according to Malbon, Jesus does not accept this title.

⁶ N.R. PETERSEN, "Point of View in Mark's Narrative", *Semeia* 12 (1978) 97-121; J. DEWEY, "Point of View and the Disciples in Mark", *SBL Seminar Papers* (ed. K.H. RICHARDS) (Chico, CA 1982) 97-106; V. BALAGUER, *Testimonio y tradición en San Marcos*. Narratología del segundo evangelio (Pamplona 1990); S.H. SMITH, *A Lion with Wings*. A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark's Gospel (Sheffield 1996) 166-191; B. WITHERINGTON III, *The Gospel of Mark*. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI 2001) 59-62.

"Point of view" belongs as well to the semantic field of opinions and evaluations: it refers to a particular way or attitude of considering a matter. The same wideness of meaning can be found when narrative critics talk about the point of view within a story ⁷.

1. *About the Narrative Point of View in General*

The basic axiom of narrative criticism says that the same story can be told in different ways. To some extent this way of narrating depends on the point of view from which the story is told. There is a point of view in every narration.

The best example of how narrative point of view works comes from cinema. A camera can move slowly or fast, bringing something into focus or remaining at a distance. It can impersonate the perceptions of a character or it can see everybody from an external position. Analogously, using words instead of images, in written narrative there is a position from which the story is told.

This rather imprecise description requires further remarks. Genette established the necessity of distinguishing between "mode" and "voice". In fact, one must not identify who speaks (voice) with where the focus of perception (mode) is. The voice corresponds to the identity of the one who narrates, that can be someone external to the story or one of the characters. If the narrator is one of the characters, he or she can narrate in first or in third person. On the other hand, the mode does not answer the question of who narrates, but the question of how the story is told, at which distance and from which perspective ⁸.

The distinction between mode and voice makes it possible to differentiate between the voice of the narrator and the point of view that he may take to provide the information. The voice of the nar-

⁷ There has been a lot of theoretical discussion on the notion of narrative point of view. However, its complexity depends strongly on the need of describing features developed by modern narrative, mostly absent from the Gospels. This allows us to go on, omitting an exposition of the different theories. See P. PUGLIATTI, *Lo sguardo nel racconto. Teorie e prassi del punto di vista* (Bologna 1985); G. YAMASAKI, *Watching a Biblical Narrative. Point of View in Biblical Exegesis* (London 2007) 1-41.

⁸ G. GENETTE, *Figures III* (Paris 1972), chap. 4; see also G. GENETTE, *Nouveau discours du récit* (Paris 1983).

rator can coincide with the point of view of the narration, as is always the case in a first-person narrative, but this coincidence is not necessary. The narrator can convey the point of view of a character, leaving the voice to him or to her, but expressing distance, showing somehow that he does not share it. On the contrary, the narrator can adopt the point of view of a character keeping his own voice ⁹.

The subtleness of Genette's distinction should not cause one to forget a basic aspect of the expression of point of view: when the voice heard is not that of the narrator, but that of a character, that is, when the narrator reproduces a character's words in direct speech, that character normally enunciates his or her own point of view ¹⁰.

As a result, in order to analyze the point of view, one must take into consideration who speaks (the voice), and not only the mode. In the case of Mark, taking the narrative voice into consideration becomes decisive in order to analyze correctly the point of view. The analysis has to pay attention to how the story is narrated, considering who speaks or acts, and what he or she does or says ¹¹.

2. *The Narrative Point of View in Mark*

In Mark 10,46-52, the narrative is in third person. More precisely: the narrator is not one of the characters of the story. This "external" position allows him to use several combinations. As we shall see, he adopts for some part of the episode Bartimaeus' point of view on the psychological plane. Most important, at the end the narrator leaves the word to Jesus to offer the hermeneutic key: the

⁹ "(...) ce qui reste, et qui fait partie des acquis insurpassés (et insurpassables) de Genette, c'est la distinction mode/voix, c'est-à-dire la possibilité pour le narrateur de raconter avec sa propre voix tout en faisant entendre le point de vue d'autres sources énonciatives, quand bien même elles ne prennent pas la forme d'un discours", A. RABATEL, 'Points de vue et représentations du divin dans 1 Samuel 17,4-51: Le récit de la Parole et de l'agir humain dans le combat de David contre Goliath', *Regards croisés sur la Bible. Études sur le point de vue. Actes du IIIe colloque international du RRENAB* (Paris 2007) 15-55, here 20.

¹⁰ Except in the case of irony, free indirect discourse, expression of hypothesis, or heterodiegetic narratives: RABATEL, "Points de vue", 21.

¹¹ See Y. BOURQUIN, "Vers une nouvelle approche de la focalisation", *Analyse narrative et Bible. Deuxième colloque international du RRENAB* (eds. C. FOCANT – A. WÉNIN) (BETL 191; Leuven 2005) 497-506.

narrator hides his own point of view behind that of his "hero". This statement requires an explanation, which necessitates going beyond Bartimaeus' episode.

The analysis of point of view must be done following the narrative step by step, since the point of view can change throughout the different episodes. It is therefore impossible to present here an exposition of the narrative point of view in the whole Gospel. I will limit myself to a brief observation about the peculiar relation between the ideological point of view of the narrator and that of Jesus, such as it is delineated in Mark 1,1-13.

From the very beginning, the narrator proclaims two titles of Jesus: Messiah and Son of God (Mark 1,1). Without any pretensions to neutrality, he shows his ideological point of view with regard to the main character of the story he is going to tell.

The initial statement of the narrator is confirmed by the Scripture fulfilled in John (1,2-8) and above all by the Father's voice (1,9-11). Regarding the ideological plane of the point of view, the episode of Jesus' baptism plays a primordial role, for the narrator bestows a "badge of reliability" upon Jesus, i.e. the narrator makes a positive evaluation of a character increasing the value of all his or her actions and words in the following episodes ¹².

If this badge of reliability is conferred upon a character at the beginning of the story, its weight will be felt throughout the whole narrative, as is the case in Mark ¹³. Moreover, if the badge of reliability is not conferred by a narrator's commentary, but by God, through a Scripture citation or through his own voice, its authority becomes supreme ¹⁴.

This means that, from the beginning of Mark's narrative, the authority of one of the characters is bigger than that of the narrator. Or rather, Jesus' point of view becomes normative for the narrator himself. Jesus appears from the start not only as someone who is on the side of God and against Satan (1,12-13), but as a privileged exponent of God's ideological point of view ¹⁵.

¹² W.C. BOOTH, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (London 21983) 18.

¹³ R.C. TANNEHILL, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role", *JR* 57 (1977) 386-405, esp. 391.

¹⁴ On God's role in Mark, see J.R. DONAHUE, "A Neglected Factor in the Theology of Mark", *JBL* 101 (1982) 563-594; P. DANOVE, "The Narrative Function of Mark's Characterization of God", *NT* 43 (2001) 12-30.

¹⁵ See J.D. KINGSBURY, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia, PA 1983) 47-50; M. VIRONDA, *Gesù nel Vangelo di Marco*. Narratologia e cristologia (Supplementi alla Rivista biblica 41; Bologna 2003) 110-111.

II. Context of Mark 10,46-52

The Gospel of Mark turns around Jesus' identity and mission, progressively revealed to the other characters, especially the group of the disciples.

At the end of the first part of Mark (1,14-8,26), the situation of the disciples with respect to Jesus is described symbolically through the story of the two-stage healing of the blind man of Bethsaida (8,22-26), in which Jesus' power faces up to human limits and overcomes them. Thus the first part of the Gospel ends with a denunciation and a hope.

1. *The Plot in Mark 8,27-10,52 and the Function of the Bartimaeus Episode*

The progressive manifestation of Jesus and the corresponding process of his comprehension reach a decisive point in Peter's confession in Caesarea Philippi, an episode (8,27-9,1) that opens a new phase in the narrative ¹⁶.

Up to Peter's confession, Jesus had refused all the proclamations of his identity, forbidding it to be spoken of. But in 8,27 he takes the initiative and asks from his disciples a more precise description than that of the people, who see him as a prophet. Peter hits the mark, calling him the Messiah. Jesus asks them not to speak about it, but he does not refuse the content of Peter's answer ¹⁷.

¹⁶ Dupont, who calls Mark 8,27-9,13 the "center of the Gospel", demonstrates how Peter's confession cannot be separated from Jesus' words in 8,31-33, which are strongly connected with 8,34-9,1 and with Jesus' transfiguration; see J. DUPONT, "L'aveugle de Jéricho recouvre la vue et suit Jésus", *Études sur les évangiles synoptiques* (ed. J. DUPONT) (BETL 70; Leuven-Louvain 1985) I, 350-367, here 353-354. On the meaning of Peter's confession, see also P. MASCILONGO, "Ma voi, chi dite che io sia?". Analisi narrativa dell'identità di Gesù e del cammino dei discepoli nel Vangelo secondo Marco, alla luce della "Confessione di Pietro" (Mc 8,27-30) (AnBib 192; Roma 2011).

¹⁷ When Jesus does not accept a confession, he manifests his refusal explicitly. Later, Jesus will describe himself indirectly as the Messiah (9,41), and in front of the high-priest he will accept the title without ambiguities (14,61-62). Cf. R.C. TANNEHILL, "The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology", *Semeia* 16 (1979) 57-95, 72; J.-N. ALETTI, "La construction du personnage Jésus dans les récits évangéliques. Le cas de Marc", *Analyse narrative et Bible. Deuxième Colloque international du RRENAB* (eds. C. FOCANT – A. WÉNIN) (BETL 191; Leuven 2005) 19-42, 26.

However, immediately after his confession, it is Peter who does not accept the itinerary of Jesus, which includes rejection and death (8,31-32). Then Jesus assimilates Peter's way of thinking to people's opinions (8,33). Therefore, Jesus' characterization remains still unfinished: although a step has been taken in the manifestation of Jesus' identity, the revelation goes on. He is the Messiah, but not as human beings, not even those closest to him, understand it. The reader wonders whether Peter and the other disciples will accept the messianism described by Jesus.

Just as the Father's voice had approved Jesus' humiliation among sinners after his baptism, the Father shows again his support to his Son, now in front of witnesses — Peter, James, and John (9,2-13). But Jesus' transfiguration could foster a triumphalist understanding of his messianism, as in fact will become evident in 10,32-45. Therefore, Jesus commands Peter, James, and John to tell no one — until he is risen — what they have seen, that is, his glory, not what they have heard, the Father's words.

In the following episodes, Jesus will make efforts to correct the understanding of the Messiah held by Peter and implicitly shared by the others. The formation of the disciples appears clearly in Jesus' words after their argument on who is the greatest (9,33-37) and after the request made by the sons of Zebedee (10,32-45). To enter the kingdom they must receive it like children (10,13-16). The episode of the rich man (10,17-31) underlines the need of leaving everything to follow Jesus, a teaching which completes his statements about the value of life and the world in 8,35-37 and 9,42-48. By correcting their notion of the Messiah, Jesus also corrects the idea that the disciples hold of themselves. Their mission must be identified with that of Jesus¹⁸.

Finally, when Jesus and the disciples go out of Jericho, the last city before going up to Jerusalem, Bartimaeus, the last character in the Gospel to benefit by a miracle, is also the only one who follows Jesus after being healed. Jesus praises his faith, the same faith he has missed in his disciples. And Bartimaeus has abandoned his mantle, that is, all his possessions. At the end of the section on the way, he offers a symbol, parallel to that of the blind man of Bethsaida¹⁹.

¹⁸ ALETTI, "La construction", 32.

¹⁹ On this episode, see E. SALVATORE, "*E vedeva a distanza ogni cosa*": il racconto della guarigione del cieco di Betsaida (Mc 8,22-26) (Aloisiana 32;

The disciples have left everything to follow Jesus (10,28), but they still have to correct their ambitions and accept the way of the cross. They are not hopeless. Their situation is similar to that of the blind man of Bethsaida at the middle point of his healing, when he could see men who looked like trees. If they let Jesus heal them, they will see everything clearly ²⁰.

Bartimaeus appears as a model of following Jesus because of his faith. In contrast to Peter, who had confessed Jesus as the Messiah, but had refused the cross, Bartimaeus joins a messianic confession (Son of David) with the acceptance of his master's way. And consequently he does not receive any rebuke from Jesus. In contrast to the rich man, who does not want to leave his wealth notwithstanding the explicit call to follow Jesus, Bartimaeus abandons the little he has and follows him, although he has not been called. In contrast to James and John, who ask for honor and receive the invitation to share Jesus' destiny, Bartimaeus asks to see and he obtains it, just to immediately follow Jesus in the way which leads to the passion and death.

Besides concluding the section on the way, the Bartimaeus episode prepares Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. The exit from Jericho, Bartimaeus' cries, the title of Son of David, and the mention of his mantle link Mark 10,46-52 with 11,1-11 ²¹.

But it is above all Bartimaeus himself, who connects the section about discipleship with what follows ²². His messianic cries outside Jericho mark a transition between the education of the disciples on the way and the public manifestation of Jesus in Jerusalem.

Roma 2004); G. BONIFACIO, *Personaggi minori e discepoli in Marco 4-8: la funzione degli episodi dei personaggi minori nell'interpretazione con la storia dei protagonisti* (AnBib 173; Roma 2008) 219-249.

²⁰ On the function of the Bartimaeus narrative within the section on the way, especially with respect to the other episodes of Mark 10, cf. DUPONT, "L'aveugle", 354-355. For a comparison with Mark 8,22-26, see M.N. KELLER, "Opening Blind Eyes: A Revisioning of Mark 8:22-10:52", *BTB* 31 (2001) 151-167; SALVATORE, *E vedeva*, 261-265.

²¹ Cf. DUPONT, "L'aveugle", 351.

²² Cf. BEST, *Following Jesus*, 134.

2. *The Ideological Point of View throughout Mark 8,27–10,45*

If the section on the way narrates Jesus' efforts to teach his disciples, it is not difficult to translate it into terms of an ideological point of view.

At the beginning of the section, confirmed by God and followed by the narrator, Jesus reveals his point of view about his own person and mission. The progressive manifestation of this ideological point of view occupies a central place in the narrative. Almost every episode in the section ends reporting Jesus' words. If the whole section is divided into ten episodes (8,27-9,1; 9,2-13; 9,14-29; 9,30-32; 9,33-50; 10,1-12; 10,13-16; 10,17-31; 10,32-45; and 10,46-52), only two do not end this way: 9,30-32 and the Bartimaeus episode.

On the other hand, Peter's refusal of the cross as well as the misunderstandings of the group of the disciples can be seen as the manifestation of another point of view. The crowd seems to be on the side of the disciples, although the reader is never informed about what they think. Both groups, as well as other minor characters, hold opinions which are usually opposite to those of Jesus, at least up to Mark 10,46-52.

In what follows, I shall try to show the progressive manifestation of Jesus' and the disciples' points of view on the ideological plane throughout the section on the way.

Mark 8,27-9,1 offers a conflict of points of view about Jesus. He wants the disciples to give people's point of view and then their own. After the first answer, Jesus shows neither approval nor refusal, but his new question implies that he considers popular descriptions to be insufficient. After Peter's confession, Jesus asks them to keep silence about his messianic condition, probably because their point of view is still incomplete, although the text gives no reason for this command. They must accept the next teaching of Jesus. Jesus expresses his own point of view about himself concentrating on a single point: the cross — he says nothing about being a prophet or the Messiah.

Peter's refusal shows an opposite point of view. It is not simply a misunderstanding of Jesus' deeds, as in the first part of the Gospel. The vigorous reaction of Jesus is more eloquent than any comment by the narrator, whose voice is practically absent during this dialogue: he makes only a brief remark in 8,32a. He prefers to hide behind Jesus' words.

There is no opposition between Jesus and Peter as characters (after six days, Jesus will choose Peter as a witness of his glory), but between two points of view about the messianic identity of Jesus. He makes clear to his disciples that there is no intermediate way: either you think as Jesus, or you think as human beings, a point of view which he identifies with that of Satan.

In the next episode (9,2-13), Jesus surprisingly says nothing during the transfiguration, to the point that the narrator, against his usage, evaluates Peter's statement in 9,6. Thus the Father's voice is emphasized: God confirms his agreement with Jesus' words and invites the disciples to listen to him, that is, to adapt their way of thinking to his point of view. The dialogue between Jesus and the disciples in 9,9-13 shows that they do not understand the resurrection, but Jesus does not react as he had done before with Peter.

Mark 9,30-32 reflects again the contrast between Jesus' and the disciples' point of view. Jesus speaks; the disciples keep quiet, but the narrator reports their reaction (their point of view remains in the background). They do not dare to ask; Jesus instead asks them what they were discussing on the way, giving them a new lesson (9,33-50). The correction of John's claim in 9,38-41 reveals that the previous extension of the call to "anybody" (8,34) was a consequence of what following Jesus means. He urges the disciples not to identify as his followers only those who are physically close to him. It is interesting to observe that he considers the disciples as his (9,41): their misunderstanding has not broken the real relation of belonging to Jesus.

In 10,13-16, the reader finds out that the disciples have not understood Jesus' teaching about becoming like children (9,33-37). Briefly, they make no progress ²³.

The same impression is left by the episode of the rich man. This time, Jesus' teaching refers to wealth — it is not a sign of divine blessing, but an obstacle to entering the kingdom. The dialogue with his disciples shows again the distance between their points of view. They still think like human beings (10,27).

Finally, we come to 10,32-45. The reaction to the third announcement of Jesus' death illustrates dramatically the disciples'

²³ At least they recognize his authority, for they obey Jesus and let the children come to him; Peter called him "Rabbi" in 9,5 and John "Master" in 9,38 (cf. 9,16; 10,17.20.35.51).

lack of understanding. John and James seem to have listened only to Jesus' words in 8,38–9,1. They have not heeded the word "cross" and, as well as the other ten, they have not understood the invitation to service (9,35). Jesus' answer reflects that he considers God's point of view to be above his own ²⁴.

If the section on the way ended in Mark 10,45, one should speak of the failure of Jesus' teaching.

III. Plot and Characters in Mark 10,46-52

Several divisions of the Bartimaeus episode have been proposed based on narrative or structural criteria ²⁵. But every outline shows some problems. In fact, none of the schemes developed by modern narratology seem to suit this episode ²⁶.

I would suggest that this difficulty arises because two different kinds of plot are present in Mark 10,46-52: a "plot of resolution" and a "plot of revelation". Briefly, when the plot is of resolution, the pertinent question is: "what is going to happen?" On the contrary, if the narration follows a plot of revelation or recognition, the concatenation of events becomes less relevant with respect to the details that reflect the protagonist's personality ²⁷.

These two kinds of plot can be combined within a story. This possibility helps to understand many Gospel narratives, because Jesus' actions not only solve a complication, but also contribute to manifesting his identity ²⁸.

²⁴ Cf. KINGSBURY, *Christology*, 49.

²⁵ See H.D. BETZ, "The Early Christian Miracle Story: Some Observations on the Form Critical Problem", *Semeia* 11 (1978) 69-81, esp. 72-74; H.-J. ECKSTEIN, "Markus 10,46-52 als Schlüsseltext des Markusevangeliums", *ZNW* 87 (1996) 33-50, esp. 39; SALVATORE, *E vedeva*, 250-251; A. MPEVO MPOLO, *Genre, sens, position et fonction littéraire des récits marciens de surdi-mutité et de cécité*. Mc 7,31-37; Mc 8,22-26; Mc 9,14-29; Mc 10,46-52: critique de rédaction et analyse structurelle (EBib Nouvelle Série 54; Paris 2004) 379-386.

²⁶ For an overview of these schemes, see MARGUERAT – BOURQUIN, *Pour lire*, 53-67.

²⁷ S. CHATMAN, *Story and Discourse*. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca, NY 1978) 48.

²⁸ J.-N. ALETTI, *L'art de raconter Jésus Christ*. L'écriture narrative de l'évangile de Luc (Paris 1989) 59-60 and *passim* (about Luke's plot); see also MARGUERAT – BOURQUIN, *Pour lire*, 72-74.

This is why the classical stages of a plot do not fit perfectly the Gospel narratives. Therefore, it is more practical to start by a division of the episode according to its scenes following the model of Greek tragedy. A change of scene takes place when one or more characters go out and others come in ²⁹.

According to this criterion, Mark 10,46-52 is easily divided into four scenes, preceded by a presentation and followed by the description of the final situation:

- 1) 10,46, stage setting;
- 2) 10,47-48, beginning of the action, tension between Bartimaeus and the crowd;
- 3) 10,49a, Jesus and the crowd;
- 4) 10,49b, Bartimaeus and the crowd;
- 5) 10,50-52a, Bartimaeus and Jesus;
- 6) 10,52bc, final situation.

Notwithstanding its simplicity, this structure immediately highlights two points: the story moves around Jesus and Bartimaeus; and the last scene must be the most important, because it describes the final meeting between the main characters ³⁰.

The next step is to exhibit the plot's development, or rather to explain how the two plots are combined.

1. *Plot of Resolution*

At first sight, the narrative appears to be a plot of resolution. Let us see succinctly its stages.

Mark 10,46 constitutes the presentation. The reader receives information about the characters and their situation. No plot is generated, because no "narrative program" — that is, an action which requires a reaction — remains pending. The arrival in Jericho does

²⁹ In Greek tragedy, "the most common way to break up an episode into smaller parts was through exit and entrance of characters, dividing an episode into what we might call discrete scenes", M.R. HALLERAN, "Episodes", *A Companion to Greek Tragedy* (ed. J. GREGORY) (Malden 2008) 167-182, here 168.

³⁰ A similar structure is proposed by W. KIRCHSCHLÄGER, "Bartimäus - Paradigma einer Wundererzählung (Mk 10,46-52 par)", *The Four Gospels 1992*. FS Frans Neirynck (eds. F. VAN SEGBROECK – C.M. TUCKETT – G. VAN BELLE – J. VERHEYDEN) (BETL 100; Leuven 1992) 1105-1123, here 1109-1110.

not create tension, because this program is closed at once: they go out of the city. The second verb ("was sitting") indicates a situation.

The presentation concentrates on Bartimaeus, who receives a considerable amount of attention with respect to the other characters. His name has no relevance for the plot of resolution, i.e. nothing would have changed if the narrator had omitted it. On the other hand, Bartimaeus' description as "a blind beggar" does offer essential information in order to understand the development of the plot of resolution, as is evident. The description of his spatial situation, "sitting by the roadside", can also be explained in terms of the plot of resolution: later, he will spring up (10,50) and at the end he will follow Jesus "on the way" (v. 52c).

The action properly starts with Bartimaeus crying out (v. 47). This is the narrative program that causes the plot to start — technically, the "contract" — because his plea for mercy can be accepted or refused by Jesus and the reader wonders what is going to happen. Thus we can correctly speak of a plot of resolution.

The opposition of "many" to Bartimaeus' action (v. 48) appears as an obstacle or "complication" to the accomplishment of the contract. Its narrative function consists in delaying the denouement in order to increase the dramatic tension.

When Jesus commands the disciples to call the blind man (v. 49), the first complication disappears, but the plot continues, because the reader does not know if Bartimaeus will accept the call; he could feel disappointed by the fact that Jesus does not come to him and then refuse to go. The narrative program of calling Bartimaeus finishes very soon, when he comes with celerity (v. 50). But a certain tension remains, because we do not know if he will obtain what he has asked for.

Jesus' question in 10,51 does not imply the acceptance of the contract yet, but it opens instead a new narrative program. It is not a rhetorical question, simply addressed to establish contact. In fact, in the foregoing episode, an identical question (10,36) ended with the rejection of the corresponding petition. Jesus desires to know the content of Bartimaeus' wish in order to decide whether he will satisfy it or not ³¹.

The expression of Bartimaeus' wish in 10,51b reformulates the initial contract, by specifying its content: the mercy he was searching for is not money, but concerned recovering sight. Accordingly,

³¹ J. DELORME, "Guérison d'un aveugle?", *Unité chrétienne* 73-74 (1984) 8-18, esp. 11-12.

the resolution (and the narrative's climax) comes in 10,52, when Jesus proclaims salvation obtained through faith and the narrator indicates that the blind man receives his sight.

However, if this episode is just a healing story, described as a plot of resolution, this way of ending is rather anomalous. The words of Jesus in 10,52a do not answer directly Bartimaeus' request, for he speaks of salvation and attributes it not to his power, but to the blind man's faith. And the healing report appears on the lips of the narrator, who simply says that Bartimaeus received his sight, without any description of the miracle.

Scholars noted long ago the strangeness of this ending: "The miracle itself is attached almost as an afterthought to Bartimaeus' stubborn refusal to be intimidated by the crowd, and the solution is virtually no solution at all. It is simply a dismissal after a comment by Jesus identifying that stubbornness as faith" ³².

This curious way of ending highlights Jesus' final statement. Using identical words as those addressed to the hemorrhaging woman in Mark 5,34, he declares that Bartimaeus' faith has been the determinant factor in his behavior and the cause of the miracle.

The last words of the episode — "He followed him on the way" — confirm the predominance of faith's manifestation over the healing narrative. It makes no sense taking this sentence as the proof of the miracle — if Bartimaeus walks, then he is able to see ³³. He was blind, not paralytic!

It is quite reasonable to conclude that the theme of the episode consists mainly in the revelation of Bartimaeus' faith, rather than in the healing of his blindness. "The main emphasis of the story is the great faith of the blind beggar. This is clear from the climactic saying, 'your faith has saved you' (v. 52) and from the almost exclusive concentration on the behavior of Bartimaeus throughout most of the account" ³⁴.

³² P.J. ACHTEMEIER, "And He Followed Him: Miracles and Discipleship in Mark 10:46-52", *Semeia* 11 (1978) 115-145, here 120. The classification of this episode caused some trouble to form criticism. See BETZ, "Early Christian", 69-72; M.G. STEINHAUSER, "The Form of the Bartimaeus Narrative", *NTS* 32 (1986) 583-595.

³³ STEIN, *Mark*, 491 and 497, takes it as both a sign of a call story and a proof of the healing.

³⁴ C.D. MARSHALL, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative* (NTS Monograph Series 64; Cambridge 1989) 125. See also S. SCHLUMBERGER, "Le récit de la foi de Bartimée (Marc 10/46-52)", *ETR* 68 (1993) 73-81.

The best way of describing this phenomenon in narrative terms consists in saying that, in addition to the plot of resolution, Mark 10,46-52 contains a plot of revelation. Keeping this in mind allows us to understand better the stages of the episode, especially the denouement. As we shall see, the two plots are not to be considered as strictly parallel; it is more convenient to see the plot of resolution as subordinated to the plot of revelation.

2. Plot of Revelation

In contrast to his final assertion in other episodes (Mark 9,37 or 10,42-45) Jesus' sanction in 10,52 is not about his own mission. He speaks about Bartimaeus. Therefore, the main object of the revelation cannot be the identity of Jesus, although it is he who gives the clue to understanding the whole episode.

The faith of Bartimaeus "has saved" him. The use of a perfect tense implies that this healing and/or salvation is the current effect of something previous. Thus Jesus' words imply an approval of Bartimaeus' behavior and words, just as he had approved the behavior and thoughts of the hemorrhaging woman in Mark 5,25-34. Jesus' statement unifies the description of the blind man. His many actions appear as a manifestation of a single reality, his faith.

Therefore, the whole episode can be read again, to see whether this faith has appeared throughout the narrative and in what it consists. Jesus says "your faith", and it is logical to wonder about the object of it: faith in God?, in the power of God's kingdom?, in God's presence through the action of Jesus? Thus, the question that will orient the analysis of the plot of revelation can be formulated like this: before Jesus reveals Bartimaeus' faith, was it present somehow in the narrative?

In fact, the story does reveal progressively the faith of Bartimaeus through his words and deeds, although the narrator avoids the semantic field of faith. The plot of revelation starts at 10,47, for the presentation (10,46) offers no information which can be considered as a manifestation of Bartimaeus' faith. By asking for mercy, Bartimaeus not only shows his poverty, but he also manifests a particular knowledge about Jesus. He believes that Jesus is merciful and powerful to help him. And he calls him using a meaningful title, "Son of David", in contrast to the neutral information he has heard from

the people. Ironically, the narrator suggests that this blind man can see more than the crowd ³⁵.

Some scholars try to explain Bartimaeus' use of this title invoking *T. Sol* 20,1, where Solomon is called Son of David by one who asks to be healed ³⁶. This seems highly improbable, because of the late date of *T. Sol* ³⁷. In order to understand the cry of Bartimaeus, it is enough to suppose a reference to the book of Isaiah: Isa 29,18; 35,5; 42,6-7, 16, and Isa 61,1 (LXX) ³⁸. Therefore, the title can be related to Mark 1,1 and 8,27-30 ³⁹.

After the first cry, the narrator makes visible Bartimaeus' faith more through his actions than through his words. His perseverance, in spite of the opposition (10,48), can be seen, in the light of Jesus' statement in 10,52, as a consequence of a solid and bold faith that does not fade in front of the backlash. The use of a reinforced comparative in v. 48 stresses that the intensity of Bartimaeus' request grows in front of the unfavorable atmosphere.

The gesture of throwing off the mantle (10,50) should be considered as the expression of an inner disposition, and not only an anecdotal detail or a means to increase the story's liveliness. The mantle was the house of the poor man, his only shelter to spend the night in (cf. Exod 22,25-26; Deut 24,10-13). But it must be abandoned if it

³⁵ ECKSTEIN, "Markus 10,46-52", 49; C. FOCANT, *L'évangile selon Marc* (Commentaire biblique: NT 2; Paris 2004) 405-406.

³⁶ D.C. DULING, "Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son of David", *HTR* 68 (1975) 235-252; J.H. CHARLESWORTH, "The Son of David: Solomon and Jesus (Mark 10:47)", *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism* (eds. P.J. BORG — S. GIVERSEN) (Aarhus 1995) 72-87; J.M. VAN CANGH, "'Fils de David' dans les évangiles synoptiques", *Figures de David à travers la Bible. XVIIe congrès de l'ACFEB (Lille, 1er-5 septembre 1997)* (eds. L. DESROUSSEAUX — J. VERMEYLEN) (LD 177; Paris 1999) 345-396; C.A. EVANS, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (WBC 34B; Nashville, TN 2001) 126-135.

³⁷ See R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI 2002) 423; FOCANT, *Marc*, 409.

³⁸ See D. ROURE, "La figure de David dans l'évangile de Marc: des traditions juives aux interprétations évangéliques", *Figures de David à travers la Bible. XVIIe congrès de l'ACFEB (Lille, 1er-5 septembre 1997)* (eds. L. DESROUSSEAUX — J. VERMEYLEN) (LD 177; Paris 1999) 397-412.

³⁹ And also to Mark 12,35-37. I do not include this pericope in the discussion, because I intend to explain Bartimaeus' cry and his faith in Jesus in the context of what the reader of Mark already knows, and not what he or she is going to learn later.

becomes an obstacle to reaching Jesus quickly ⁴⁰. Besides magnanimity, Bartimaeus' faith includes obedience to the call of Jesus.

"Master, let me receive my sight" (10,51). Also the last words of Bartimaeus are a manifestation of his faith. Perhaps "sight" has here a spiritual sense, but even when considered in its physical sense, Bartimaeus' request appears full of faith in Jesus' power. The title that Bartimaeus chooses this time indicates that he recognizes Jesus' authority as a master.

Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the way (10,52c): this information, irrelevant to the plot of resolution, is useful to complete both the characterization of Bartimaeus and the plot of revelation. Jesus has not called him as he did with the disciples; he tells him to go (10,52a). But Bartimaeus' apparent disobedience is consistent with Jesus' invitation in 8,34: anyone can follow Jesus, provided that he accepts to go along the way which leads to the cross. Jesus cannot refuse this new follower, although he does not belong to the group of his disciples ⁴¹.

Finally, Bartimaeus' words and deeds refer always to Jesus. It is logical to conclude that the object of his faith is Jesus himself. Although the main object of the revelation contained in this episode concerns Bartimaeus, there is also a revelation about Jesus, because "christology and discipleship prove to be simply two sides of the same coin in the Gospel of Mark" ⁴². To explain it, we must study briefly the characterization of Bartimaeus and Jesus, before coming to the analysis of the point of view.

3. *Characters*

As said above, the presentation (10,46) gives a much more detailed description of Bartimaeus than that of the other characters. The mention of his name, useless for the plot of resolution, undoubtedly forms part of Bartimaeus' characterization, as it contributes to individualise the character ⁴³.

⁴⁰ R.A. CULPEPPER, "Mark 10:50: Why Mention the Garment?", *JBL* 101 (1982) 131-132.

⁴¹ Not all those who follow Jesus are to be considered as being among the disciples: cf. E.S. MALBON, "Disciples/Crowd/Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers", *NT* 28 (1986) 104-130, esp. 106-110.

⁴² V.K. ROBBINS, "The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus in Marcan Theology", *JBL* 92 (1973) 224-243, here 226.

⁴³ On the importance of proper names in characterization, see F.W. BUR-

Later, he starts up the plot, he usually keeps the action in motion, and he is the one to whom Jesus refers in his final statement. The centrality of Bartimaeus can be confirmed by the syntax: of the thirteen conjugated verbs employed by the narrator, he is the subject of seven — Jesus only of three. Therefore, it is Bartimaeus who is the protagonist of the episode, and not Jesus.

Many aspects of Bartimaeus' progressive characterization have been already described, as long as it coincides with the plot of revelation. Now it can be added that throughout most of the episode, the task of building Bartimaeus as a character falls to the voice of the narrator. But at the narrative's peak, it is Jesus who defines him, and his words imply a reinterpretation of the whole preceding characterization, as we have said.

Jesus acts and speaks little, but decisively. When he stops and calls Bartimaeus, he dispells at once the opposition. Later, the command of making Bartimaeus come, instead of going to him, as could be logical since he is blind, gives the impression of superiority. And Jesus' final statement, as noted before, offers the definitive interpretation of both the episode and the identity of Bartimaeus.

Jesus' acceptance of Bartimaeus' petition implies that he refuses neither the titles applied to him by Bartimaeus (Son of David and Master), nor the attributes implied in his request (merciful and capable of healing blindness). In Mark, when Jesus does not accept a confession, he manifests his refusal explicitly ⁴⁴.

To be sure, an attempt to find a precise idea of what "Son of David" exactly means here (a healer, a king, a prophet?) is rather useless, because in Mark "titles can no longer be seen as ready-made definitions which clarify the Jesus event and the stories of Jesus; they may serve instead as reflections which are shaped by the realities of Jesus. To some degree Jesus has become the *hermeneusis* of all messianic titles and messianic conceptions" ⁴⁵.

NETT, "Characterization and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospels", *Semeia* 63 (1993) 3-28, esp. 17-18.

⁴⁴ See TANNEHILL, "The Gospel", 72; ALETTI, "La construction", 26.

⁴⁵ E.K. BROADHEAD, *Naming Jesus*. Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark (JSNTSS 175; Sheffield 1999) 115. The title of Messiah appears clearly when it can no longer produce misunderstandings. "Secrecy is no longer necessary when the titles are applied to the Christ of the passion, for then they are properly used. The narrative situation in which the titles are appropriated helps to define their meaning", TANNEHILL, "The Gospel", 88.

Finally, Jesus' statement in 10,52a shows that he can see what others cannot: Bartimaeus' faith. Jesus does not speak directly about himself, but he provides the disciples with an example of what following him means.

IV. Analysis of Point of View in Mark 10,46-52

This section intends to analyse the steering of point of view in Mark 10,46-52 and its consequences for the interpretation, following the methodology proposed by Yamasaki ⁴⁶. He has gathered together concepts and tools useful to analyse the point of view, and has arranged them according to the typology of Uspensky, who distinguished five planes: temporal, spatial, psychological, phraseological, and ideological ⁴⁷.

I will follow Yamasaki's proposal with some differences. In the first place, nothing will be said about the phraseological plane, since, as Yamasaki recognizes, it has practically no relevance for biblical narratives ⁴⁸. For the sake of brevity, I will omit a detailed analysis of spatial, temporal, and psychological planes of the point of view. In fact, for those who are interested in the meaning of the texts and not only in the formal features of their composition, the ideological point of view is the most important ⁴⁹.

1. *The Temporal, Spatial, and Psychological Planes of Point of View*

According to the analysis of the temporal point of view, the most important moment is to be placed in 10,49-52b, where the rhythm diminishes to the speed of a scene ⁵⁰. Speaking about the division

⁴⁶ YAMASAKI, *Watching*, 152-187.

⁴⁷ B. USPENSKY, *A Poetics of Composition*. The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form (Berkeley, CA 1983).

⁴⁸ YAMASAKI, *Watching*, 172.

⁴⁹ Yamasaki is right when he complains that the analysis of narrative point of view is too often reduced to a theological interpretation dressed as literary criticism. But I do not share his negative judgment of biblical scholars just because they concentrate upon the ideological plane of the narrative point of view, putting aside the other planes: YAMASAKI, *Watching*, 80 and 107.

⁵⁰ Narratologists distinguish four basic forms to express the temporal duration: pause, ellipsis, summary, and scene. The scene is defined by the co-

of the episode, it was said that the main scene, in terms of the presence/absence of the characters, was found in 10,50-52a. Therefore, with slight differences, the analysis of the temporal point of view confirms the analysis of the plot.

The narrator adopts the spatial point of view of Bartimaeus during much of the story as well as his psychological point of view, though more briefly (10,47-48). The internal verbs can be taken as a signal that the narrator has adopted the psychological point of view of one of the characters⁵¹. Mark 10,47 contains the only verb of perception in the episode: Bartimaeus has heard. Hearing has a special force, since audition is his main way of contact with the external world. In this case, the narrator simply mentions Bartimaeus' perception. It is an inside view, brief and sober, but real. Bartimaeus cries out because he cannot see whether Jesus is near or far, and the reader shares his ignorance — he or she does not know where Jesus is, either. He or she receives the information through Bartimaeus' point of view. The narrative point of view not only is close to Bartimaeus, but it has got into him⁵².

This closeness contributes to the great liveliness of the episode, which seems to be based on the first-person narrative of Bartimaeus himself, as noted long ago: "The story seems throughout to be told, more so perhaps than any other miracle recorded in Mark, from the point of view of the man healed"⁵³. This remark is exact insofar as it is not extended to the ideological plane of the point of view.

To be sure, the narrator's closeness to Bartimaeus in the spatial and psychological planes of point of view has led some scholars to

incidence between the duration of the narration time with that of the story time (isochrony), like the reproduction of a dialogue. Normally, the narrator adopts the speed of scene for the most important moments.

⁵¹ See YAMASAKI, *Watching*, 169-170.

⁵² In 10,49, the spatial distance implies automatically that the narrative abandons the psychological point of view of Bartimaeus, who does not know what is going on. In replacement of Bartimaeus', the narrative does not take any character's point of view on the psychological plane. Jesus' actions are described from outside. The reader supposes that Jesus has heard Bartimaeus' cries, but nothing is explicitly said. He or she ignores what Jesus thinks or feels and this increases the dramatic tension, for calling the blind man still does not imply the acceptance of the contract.

⁵³ C.H. TURNER, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*. Introduction and Commentary (London 1928) 52.

conclude that the episode is meant to make the reader identify with this character ⁵⁴. It is true that, through his characterization of Bartimaeus, the narrator presents him as a model of faith and of following Jesus, in contrast to the group of the disciples. Bartimaeus offers an example to be imitated by the disciples and the crowd, and it should be offered also to the reader, because it was Jesus who stated it. But to say that Bartimaeus is a model is not the same as to say that the episode's goal is to have the reader identify with him. The text may foster this attitude, but it is difficult to determine precisely which are the effects of reading. The reader might identify with Jesus or even with the crowd ⁵⁵.

2. *Verse by Verse Analysis of the Ideological Point of View*

a) 10,46

Possible allusions to OT texts could be seen as part of the ideological point of view. In this case, the city of Jericho, which situates the episode in the context of the way towards Jerusalem (cf. 10,32), might recall many passages. But neither this verse, nor the rest of the episode, seem to allude to any particular text ⁵⁶.

One can wonder whether the detailed presentation of Bartimaeus reflects an evaluation by the narrator. In addition to emphasizing the individuality of the character, giving his proper name and its translation, maybe suggests a parallel between the son of Timaeus and the Son of David ⁵⁷. But I do not think that this can be considered a valid judgment ⁵⁸.

⁵⁴ J.F. WILLIAMS, *Other Followers of Jesus. Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark's Gospel* (JSNTSup 102; Sheffield 1994) 151-66; FRANCE, *The Gospel of Mark*, 422.

⁵⁵ Curiously enough, DUPONT, "L'aveugle", 365, thinks that the first readers of Mark should identify with those who call Bartimaeus.

⁵⁶ J. GNILKA, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (EKKNT 2; Zürich 1978) 2:108-112 mentions 2 Kgs 7,15 as a parallel of Mark 10,50 and Isa 42,18 as the background of 10,52. Other OT texts possibly alluded to in Mark 10,46-52 can be seen in ECKSTEIN, "Markus 10,46-52", 41; and J.R. EDWARDS, *The Gospel according to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI 2002) 329. However, the affinity of all these references with Bartimaeus' episode is weak, and they offer little help to interpret it.

⁵⁷ DELORME, "Guérison", 10.

⁵⁸ For speculations about the possible meaning of this name, see M. NAVARRO PUERTO, *Marcos* (Estella 2006) 382.

On the other hand, the description of Bartimaeus as “a blind beggar” could imply some kind of evaluation. In Mark “beggar” (a *hapax legomenon*) lacks particular connotations. There was a blind man in 8,22-26, but his role was entirely passive. Blindness was commonly associated in Greek myths with supernatural gifts, so the text could suggest that Bartimaeus addresses Jesus as Son of David prophetically⁵⁹. Such a connotation is certainly possible but finds no clear support in the text. To be sure, Bartimaeus belongs to a category excluded from society and considered religiously impure⁶⁰. But speaking of a blind beggar implies no clear evaluation by the narrator, neither positive nor negative.

In conclusion, the narrator does not manifest by any means his ideological point of view in 10,46.

b) 10,47

As said before, Bartimaeus’ words reflect a knowledge about Jesus that goes beyond the neutral statement he has heard. We begin to know what Bartimaeus thinks. But the relevant question refers to whether his ideological point of view receives some kind of approval. The answer is negative: the narrator has not shown his own ideological point of view, although we have hints from the preceding episodes in Mark. His discretion conforms to a narrative strategy: he waits for Jesus’ sanction.

c) 10,48

The narrator gives the point of view of those who rebuke Bartimaeus without an explicit disapproval, but with some distance, as can be seen by the use of indirect speech. It is obvious that Bartimaeus perceives the censure negatively, for it is an obstacle to the accomplishment of his wish.

⁵⁹ M.A.L. BEAVIS, “From the Margin to the Way: A Feminist Reading of the Story of Bartimaeus”, *JFSR* 14 (1998) 19-39, esp. 36-38; A. YARBRO COLLINS, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia 5.2; Minneapolis, MN 2007) 510. Others speak about a “prophetic insight” displayed by Bartimaeus, but they do not relate it to blindness: see J.R. DONAHUE – D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Mark* (SP 2; Collegeville, MN 2002) 319.

⁶⁰ See JOHNSON, “Mark 10:46-52”, 200-202; S. GUIJARRO OPORTO, “Healing Stories and Medical Anthropology: A Reading of Mark 10:46-52”, *BTB* 30 (2000) 102-112.

With respect to 10,47, it must be noted that the reproduction of Bartimaeus' words omits one of them, "Jesus". The requirement of condensing moves the narrator to take away the less important element, so that the emphasis falls on the Davidic title and the petition for mercy. At the same time, it is meaningful that the narrator has avoided indirect speech. He could easily have said that Bartimaeus cried "again", or "with the same words", or something similar. Thus, if Jesus or the narrator were against the title Son of David used by Bartimaeus, they should manifest some kind of disapproval.

d) 10,49

Here we can recall what was observed about Jesus' characterization. His command to call Bartimaeus, instead of his going where he is sitting, can be considered a manifestation of authority and dignity, and also a way of probing the endurance of Bartimaeus. With regard to the narrator's ideological point of view, his position does not appear. If in 10,48 he seemed to sympathize with Bartimaeus, he now moves away from him and concentrates on Jesus.

Why does the narrator name Bartimaeus as "the blind man" and not otherwise, for example "the beggar", or by his proper name? The same phenomenon will occur in 10,51. Bartimaeus is named by one of his features, blindness. This preference can be explained as a resource to prepare the denouement and consequently as part of the plot's management, because it helps to understand that Bartimaeus will ask for healing and not for money, as might be expected from a beggar ⁶¹.

e) 10,50

On the ideological plane, Bartimaeus' reaction manifests his acceptance of Jesus' call. The narrator seems to sympathize with Bartimaeus, simply because he obeys Jesus, whose position is normative.

f) 10,51

Ideologically, Jesus' point of view is still hidden, at least with respect to the acceptance or refusal of Bartimaeus' request. The narrator's point of view is hidden too. There is no signal which can re-

⁶¹ If the naming is taken as being part of the psychological plane of point of view, as Yamasaki suggests, then the narrator intends to present Bartimaeus as seen by those who speak to him. See YAMASAKI, *Watching*, 171-172.

veal his approval of Jesus' words, although, as said above, from the beginning of the Gospel he puts himself in Jesus' position.

The petition of the blind man reveals his ideological point of view. Although he asks for a miracle, he addresses Jesus not as a thaumaturge, but as someone with authority to teach ⁶². Bartimaeus accepts Jesus' dignity, shown by the fact of calling him instead of going towards him. In the light of 10,52c, he considers himself as a disciple.

Concerning the narrator, his ideological point of view remains unseen. He shows neither approval nor refusal; he just reproduces Bartimaeus' words.

g) 10,52

The words of Jesus in 10,52a constitute the peak of the dramatic action. He accepts Bartimaeus' petition, interprets his behavior, and ensures his salvation. At the same time, Jesus implicitly accepts the characterization made by Bartimaeus, that is, he recognizes as his own the attributes of a merciful, Davidic Messiah, equipped with the authority of a master, and able to restore sight. Defining Bartimaeus, Jesus indirectly defines himself.

The fact that Jesus performs a crucial role in the episode reflects well the normative role of his point of view in Mark. Before 10,52, some gestures had conveyed the singular authority of Jesus, such as stopping and making others call the blind man, an order that is immediately obeyed.

What does the narrator think with respect to the point of view of Jesus? The answer comes in the next two sentences. But now we can note how the narrator has described skillfully every gesture and word of Bartimaeus not employing the semantic field of faith, because he wanted Jesus to pronounce this word. He has also avoided evaluating Bartimaeus and the other characters, because he was waiting for Jesus' judgment.

Once the dialogue is over, the narrator's voice reappears. He hurries to state that Bartimaeus' desire has been accomplished, a fact that curiously was absent from Jesus' words, though implicit in the idea of salvation. The narrator employs the same term used by the blind man in his petition, in order to emphasize that it has been exactly satisfied. The meaning of Bartimaeus' following Jesus

⁶² DELORME, "Guérison", 12.

was explained before: he follows his master on the way that will lead him to the passion and death. Now it can be added that following Jesus appears as the practical consequence of putting oneself under his ideological point of view.

The narrator does not accept Jesus' point of view; he rather puts himself under it. This is a strange phenomenon in narratives, where the most authorized voice is usually that of the narrator. Here, a character knows more than the narrator, and his point of view, about himself and also about the other characters, works as normative for the narrator himself, because it is in line with God's point of view.

On the ideological plane, the narrator finally seems to approve Bartimaeus' behavior — after Jesus' statement, he no longer needs to hide.

* *

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Methodologically, the most helpful contribution of the analysis of point of view is not to be sought in the hypotheses about the text's effects on the readers, but in the interpretation of the narrative itself. In fact, it has reinforced some conclusions of the plot's analysis; especially that it is Jesus who interprets Bartimaeus' behavior in terms of faith. In other words, the interrelationship between a plot of resolution and a plot of revelation is better understood when one considers the interplay among the points of view of the narrator, of Bartimaeus, and of Jesus. The peak of the dramatic action, considered as a plot of revelation, coincides with the manifestation of the most authorized point of view on the ideological plane. The analysis of point of view helps to perceive how the narrator describes Bartimaeus' behavior very closely, but avoids expressing any judgment, so that the whole responsibility of the interpretation falls on Jesus' final statement.

What does the Bartimaeus episode mean in this context? We have already seen the contrast of Bartimaeus with other characters in the section on the way. Now, this contrast can be studied from a new perspective. Bartimaeus is the only character who follows Jesus unconditionally. Jesus is not alone any more, because his point of view has been fully accepted by a character. Therefore, the disciples (and the reader) can establish that Jesus' requirements are not utopian. If Mark 8:22-26 meant that the disciples' blindness

could be healed, then Bartimaeus' behavior shows how they should act, if they were not blind.

Mark 10:46-52 does not include any dialogue between Jesus and the disciples. The lesson is so clear that it requires no explanation, and there is no time left to them: the way to Jerusalem is coming to its end. In the decisive hour, the disciples will have to show if they have finally learnt Jesus' teaching or if, on the contrary, they still think like human beings.

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SUMMARY

This analysis of the plot and the narrative point of view in Mark 10,46-52 sheds some light on the function of this episode in relation to the characterization of Jesus and of the disciples in Mark. Bartimaeus appears as a model of both confessing Jesus as Messiah and following him on the way to the cross. The narrator describes in detail Bartimaeus' behavior, but it is Jesus who approves of it and implicitly accepts the blind man's actions and words as a correct manifestation of faith in him.

Noah, Deucalion, and the New Testament

Human cultures around the world have their “flood stories”, tales of one or more catastrophic events in the distant past¹. These stories have similarities and differences, in relation to each other and in relation to the Genesis flood story; possible causes for these include (1) common experience of living near a body of water; (2) an actual event or cluster of events from a time before the cultures diverged; or (3) some combination of (1) and (2). I do not propose here to enter into the historical questions; but it comes as no surprise that Jewish authors from the Second Temple period, as well as early Christian authors, who took for granted that Genesis has historical referents, tended toward explanations (2) and (3).

Certainly the biblical story of the great flood bears interesting resemblances to the flood traditions found elsewhere in the ancient world, most notably those from Mesopotamia and to a lesser extent those from the Hellenistic world. Hence no one finds it extraordinary that Jewish and Christian authors drew attention to these resemblances and, generally, identified the biblical Noah with the human heroes of the other stories, while insisting that any differences should be resolved in favor of Genesis.

The New Testament authors mention Noah and the great flood a handful of times, drawing one moral lesson or another from the Genesis narrative. In this essay I will raise the question whether the New Testament authors themselves show any awareness of the possible identification of Noah with characters in the non-biblical stories².

¹ For some samples, see T.H. GASTER, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament*. A Comparative Study with Chapters from Sir James G. Frazer’s *Folklore in the Old Testament* (Gloucester, MA 1981) 82-131.

² As a general rule, the translations from Greek and Hebrew follow the *English Standard Version with Apocrypha* (Oxford 2009). Similarly, I have translated passages from the LXX with the ESV (which is usually based on the MT) in mind. Unless otherwise noted, I take Graeco-Roman texts from the Loeb editions; and I have adjusted translations from the editions to match the ESV where necessary. I generally adapt the Christian Fathers from the translation in the series, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (ANF, NPNF).

On the surface, the answer to my question is a straightforward “no” since the passages that mention Noah and the flood (Matt 24,37-39; Luke 17,26-27; Heb 11,7; 1 Pet 3,20; 2 Pet 2,5; 2 Pet 3,6) seem to limit themselves to the account in Genesis ³.

However, the situation is not quite as simple as a surface observation might suggest. In the study that follows, I will focus on Greek terms that do not appear in the LXX flood account, but which do appear in accounts from other sources. Building on the kinds of criteria for detecting biblical echoes advocated by Richard Hays and Timothy Berkley, I am employing these criteria for detecting possible echoes from non-biblical sources ⁴.

A word of methodological caution, however, is in order here. My study will attend to terminological divergences from the LXX telling of the flood story, but those divergences in themselves are not enough to establish that our author is echoing some other telling of that story. After all, an author may recount a familiar tale but use his own paraphrase of the conventional terms, especially if he aims for literary achievement; he might also have access to an alternative translation of the Hebrew story, or even provide his own. And a New Testament author might be influenced by some other source from the Jewish world, where that Jewish source itself has either used paraphrase or an alternate translation.

Hence I must base an argument of this kind, not simply on a word here and there, but on something that resembles a pattern of usage. Further, I will need to establish that an allusion to a non-biblical flood story is even worth considering, both from the perspective of the availability of such stories, and from the question of whether the alleged allusion actually clarifies the New Testament text.

³ For the argument that Paul alludes to the Noah story in Rom 1,16-32, see C.J. COLLINS, “Echoes of Aristotle in Romans 2:14-15: Or, maybe Abimelech was not so bad after all”, *Journal of Markets and Morality* 13 (2010) 123-173, esp. 148-151. Similarly, for the argument that Gen 6,11-13 (LXX) helps to clarify the “corruption” (φθορά) of Rom 8,21, see C.J. COLLINS, *Genesis 1–4. A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ 2006) 182-184. O. CHRISTOFFERSSON, *The Earnest Expectation of the Creature. The Flood-Tradition as Matrix of Romans 8:18-27* (ConBNT; Stockholm 1990) argues for the flood story as a major influence in Romans 8,18-27, but assessing this argument goes beyond the scope of this study.

⁴ See the discussion in COLLINS, “Echoes of Aristotle in Romans 2:14-15”, 126-129.

I. Sources for non-biblical flood stories

Many of the ancient non-biblical flood stories come from fragments of the authors' works that are cited in other authors' works, such as Josephus, Eusebius, and Augustine. Further, a number of authors mention the flood and its protagonists incidentally, as well-known figures ⁵.

There is wide agreement that the Mesopotamian flood stories provide important context for reading the Genesis flood story. Nevertheless, these tales, being written first in Sumerian, and then in Akkadian, would have little relevance for the audience of a New Testament text, unless they were put into Greek. Hence the Babylonian scholar Berossus performed a crucial service when he made a record of Babylonian history in Greek (early 3rd century B.C.E.). The original does not survive; Alexander Polyhistor (early 1st century B.C.E.) used Berossus as a major source, and this is probably the form that appears in the quotations in Josephus (*Antiquities*, 1,93 [1.3.6]; *Against Apion*, 1,128ff [1.19f]) and in Eusebius' *Chronicle* (preserved in Georgius Syncellus, *Chronography*) ⁶. The "Noah" figure here is called Xisuthros, and the narrative contains a number of elements familiar from Genesis, such as the man taking animals and his family aboard the vessel, the release of birds, the vessel running aground on a mountain, the altar and sacrifice, and the "pitch" (ἄσφαλτος, cf. Gen 6,14 LXX).

Even earlier than Berossus is Plato (428 – 348 B.C.E.), who describes a great flood and its aftermath in his *Laws*, Book 3 (677a–680a). Plato focuses on how the destruction would have reduced the survivors to very simple living conditions, which may well have made them morally superior to "us" their successors; eventually, people developed government and laws. For his purposes Plato uses the flood story from "the ancient tales" (οἱ παλαιοὶ λόγοι), which he takes "to contain some truth" (ἀλήθειαν ἔχειν τινα); he says nothing about whether there was any hero, or about what might have

⁵ G.A. CADUFF, *Antike Sintflutsagen* (Göttingen 1986), gives a full listing of every text that might have some mention of the flood and its accompaniments; I have focused on the most relevant and promising ones.

⁶ The Greek appears on pages 53–56 of the *PG* edition of Syncellus, and an English translation in G.P. VERBRUGGHE – J.M. WICKERSHAM, *Berosus and Manetho, Introduced and Translated. Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt* (Ann Arbor, MI 1996). For the view that Josephus depends on Polyhistor, see L. FELDMAN, *Flavius Josephus, Judean Antiquities 1–4. Translation and Commentary* (Leiden 2004) 34, n. 235.

caused the flood. In his *Timaeus*, however, he also refers to an ancient flood story, and names Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha as the subjects (22a-d). It is clear that this is the same tale as the one in the *Laws*, since both mention herdsmen and shepherds in the mountains, and both say that they were “saved” (διασώζω) ⁷. Plato may give just a hint that the flood resulted from a moral defect in humankind, in saying (22d), “When the gods cleansing the earth flood it with waters” (ὅταν θεοὶ τὴν γῆν ὕδασιν καθαίροντες κατακλύζωσιν). However, it may be that he considered these disasters as simply the kind of things that happen from time to time, for whatever reason (cf. 22c, “many and divers destructions of humankind”).

Another Greek work is called *The Library*, which was once attributed to Apollodorus (fl. c. 140 B.C.E.), but is now assigned to “Pseudo-Apollodorus”; the work is generally dated after the middle of the first century B.C.E. ⁸. This account (1.7.2) has features such as Deucalion following advice from Prometheus to build a great “ark” (λάβραξ), by which he and his wife Pyrrha escaped. It is unclear why Zeus wanted to destroy the people of the Bronze Age, but he sends a great rain (πολὺν ὕετόν, cf. Gen 7,4 LXX), so that “all people were destroyed” (διαφθαρῆναι πάντας ἀνθρώπους, cf. Gen 6,13 LXX, καταφθείρω αὐτοὺς [namely, πάντας ἀνθρώπους] καὶ τὴν γῆν). The ark floated for nine days and nights, and once Deucalion disembarked, he made a sacrifice to Zeus. This telling bears some resemblances to the Mesopotamian versions, and may ultimately have been influenced by them ⁹.

Another Greek author who seems to have drawn on the Mesopotamian traditions is Lucian of Samosata (born c. 120 C.E.), who includes a flood story in his *De Syria Dea*, 12. The gods destroyed the people of the first generation for their wickedness; but they spared the

⁷ A commentator such as A.E. TAYLOR, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford 1962) 52-53, takes the identity of the two referents for granted.

⁸ Some date the work as late as about 200 C.E.; cf. J.N. BREMMER, “Near Eastern and Native Traditions in Apollodorus' Account of the Flood”, *Interpretations of the Flood* (eds. F.G. MARTINEZ – G.P. LUTTIKHUIZEN) (Leiden 1999) 39-55, at 41. However, Feldman finds some terminological connections between *The Library* and Josephus' flood account in *Antiquities* (see FELDMAN, *Josephus, Antiquities*, 29, nn. 184, 186), which would indicate that *The Library* or its sources predate Josephus.

⁹ For fuller discussion, see BREMMER, “Near Eastern and Native Traditions in Apollodorus' Account of the Flood”.

hero, Deucalion, due to his piety. His “salvation” (σωτηρία) came through a “great ark” (λάβραξ μεγάλη), which carried his family and pairs of all kinds of animals. Although he says, “This is the legend of Deucalion as told by the Greeks”, it looks like Lucian depended largely on Semitic sources¹⁰.

A full version of the flood story, with Deucalion as the hero, appears in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (c. 8 C.E.) 1,143–437. Written in Latin, it will not help us much in looking for Greek terms, though it draws on Greek tales. Along with the moral degradation of humans that provoked the gods to punish humankind (an element prominent in the Semitic versions, and almost absent from the extant Greek ones), Ovid mentions the “giants” (1.153, *gigantes*, cf. Gen 6,4 LXX) who assaulted heaven. One of Ovid’s sources was Hesiod (8th century B.C.E.), who has the earliest known mention of Deucalion, simply telling us that he was the son of Prometheus (*Catalogues of Women*, 1); Hesiod also describes the “giants” (γίγαντες), who grew from the ground as the blood of the castrated Ouranos hit the earth (*Theogony*, 176–85). But certainly Ovid did not limit himself to Hesiod’s bare account!

We find incidental mention of Deucalion and his flood in various writers, such as Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.E.), *Meteorology*, i.14 (352a, 30–35), where he tells us that the flood was local (largely in Hellenic lands), and that it resulted from a natural cycle¹¹. Plutarch (46 – c. 120 C.E.) recounts Deucalion’s flood in passing, *Moralia*, 968f (*De Sollertia animalium*). His reference to the release of a dove indicates that Plutarch also drew (ultimately) on Semitic sources. In his *Life of Pyrrhus*, 1, he treats the flood, and Deucalion and Pyrrha, as historical referents. Pausanias (2nd century C.E.), in his *Description of Greece*, has a number of scattered references to Deucalion and the flood, which likewise seem to indicate that he took them as at least touching upon history (1.18.7–8; 1.40.1; 5.1.3; 5.8.1; 10.6.2; 10.8.1).

¹⁰ See the brief note in H. STRONG – J. GARSTANG (eds.), *The Syrian Goddess* (London 1913) 81, n. 98; more fully, see R.A. ODEN, *Studies in Lucian’s De Syria Dea* (Missoula, MT 1977) 24–36. A. HILHORST, “The Noah Story: Was It Known to the Greeks?”, *Interpretations of the Flood* (eds. F. GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ – G.P. LUTTIKHUIZEN) (Leiden 1999) 56–65, goes so far as to suggest that both Plutarch and Lucian drew on the biblical tale.

¹¹ Aristotle is often thought of as being more ideologically naturalistic than, say, Plato, and this would be consistent with that.

There are indications, most clearly in Eusebius' *Preparation of the Gospel*, 10.9, 10, and Augustine, *City of God* 21.8 (preserving material from the 1st century B.C.E. Roman historian Varro), that the Greeks had tales of an earlier flood associated with a king, Ogygos; but not much is known of this person, and Jewish and Christian writers place most of their attention on the better-known Deucalion (who, as we can see, was also likened to the hero of the Mesopotamian story). There are other tales that associate great floods with various characters (such as Dardanus), but these floods are more clearly of limited significance and do not figure in the process of drawing parallels ¹².

II. References to non-biblical flood stories in Second Temple Jewish sources

Since I am looking for ways in which Second Temple Jewish authors thought about non-biblical flood stories in the period before and roughly contemporary with the New Testament, I can safely leave out of my discussion the later Rabbinic sources in Hebrew and Aramaic, even though they may indeed contain materials from the time we are considering ¹³. Besides, being in Hebrew and Aramaic, these sources will not help us in searching for Greek terms. For the most part, the specifically sectarian texts from Qumran do not have much bearing on our discussion either.

The Hebrew Bible itself does not have many explicit references to the Noah story; the most straightforward are Isaiah 54,9 and Ezekiel 14,14.20 ¹⁴. Isaiah 54,9 uses God's promise after the great flood as an image for God's enduring commitment to preserve Zion. Ezekiel 14,14.20 mentions Noah as a member of a trio of exemplary men (Noah, Daniel/Dan'el, and Job) whose righteousness would not

¹² E.g., from the first century B.C.E.: Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 1.61.2 (in Arcadia); Diodorus Siculus, 5.47.3 (at the island of Samothrace).

¹³ Cf. M. HADAS, *Hellenistic Culture*. Fusion and Diffusion (Morningside Heights, NY 1959) 79-82, who finds traces of Judaism's contact with Hellenism more in the indirect realm of loan words and modes of argumentation.

¹⁴ Some would add Isa 24,18 ("windows of heaven opened", cf. Gen 7,11; 8,2) to this list: e.g., D. STRETT, "As it was in the days of Noah: The prophets' typological interpretation of Noah's flood", *Criswell Theological Review* 5 (2007) 33-51. If this is correct, it is an image for the unavoidable devastation that will fall.

be enough to bring God to deliver Jerusalem. If the theory that the three righteous men here are taken to be non-Israelites from ancient times be correct, this passage from Ezekiel shows why a faithful Jew might willingly find connections between the biblical story of Noah and Gentile stories of a flood and its pious survivor¹⁵.

I have already mentioned a number of features in the Genesis flood story, such as the rain, and the destruction of all or most of humankind. Further, the LXX version of that story uses the verb φθείρω and cognates to describe the corruption of humankind and God's response of corrupting or destroying the earth (e.g., Gen 6,11-17); the Greek sto-

¹⁵ Because of space considerations I must be brief on this point. The *ketiv* (written in the Hebrew text) at Ezek 14,14.20; 28,3 has the consonants *dn'l*, while the *qere* (to be read aloud) has the consonants *dny'l* (to which the vowels correspond: *daniyē'l*, the normal spelling of "Daniel"). Many students of Ezekiel suppose that the prophet meant someone named Dan'el, an ancient and non-Israelite figure to go along with Noah and Job: see, for example, J.W. WEVERS, *Ezekiel* (New Century Bible; Grand Rapids, MI 1969) 115; W. ZIMMERLI, *Ezekiel* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA 1979) I, 314-315; M. GREENBERG, *Ezekiel 1-20* (AB; New York 1983) 257-258; and the very traditional Y. MOSKOVITZ, *Sefer Yehezqel* (Da'at Miqra'; Jerusalem 1985) 82 (כח). The person called Dan'il, found in the Ugaritic story of Aqhat, seems to fit the bill; he is one who "defended the rights of the widow, judged the case of the orphan" (*Aqhat* 17, v, 7-8; cf. Prov 31,9; Isa 1,17; *Keret* 16, vi, 33-34). The strongest argument against that identification is the disbelief that Ezekiel would commend "an idolatrous Baal-devotee", as discussed in H.H.P. DRESSLER, "The identification of the Ugaritic Dnil with the Daniel of Ezekiel", *VT* 29 (1979) 152-161, and "Reading and interpreting the Aqht text", *VT* 34 (1984) 78-82; see also D. BLOCK, *Ezekiel 1-24* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI 1997) 447-449. DRESSLER would have us take this Daniel as the hero of the biblical book Daniel, "a wise and righteous contemporary" of Ezekiel. Strong arguments for the other side come from J. DAY, "The Daniel of Ugarit and Ezekiel and the hero of the book of Daniel", *VT* 30 (1980) 174-184, and B. MARGALIT, "Interpreting the story of Aqht", *VT* 30 (1980) 361-365. Dressler's position would require the biblical Daniel to be well known to Ezekiel's audience as an exemplar of righteousness; and even on the traditionalist view of Daniel, there is scant evidence for this. Further, the mention of Dan'el in connection with Tyre (Ezek 28,3) seems again to support the Gentile interpretation. Perhaps, as well, Ezekiel knew the Dan'il of the Aqhat story from other sources besides the specific tale found at Ugarit. Further, there is precedent in Gen 14,22 for the LORD accepting the title of a deity worshiped by pious-but-benighted Gentiles; and this is plausible, when we realize that the Ugaritic tale of Aqhat does not recount that he practiced any of the deeds a prophet would find abhorrent.

ries likewise use the noun φθορά and its cognate verbs (commonly διαφθείρω) to designate the destruction of the flood. Under such circumstances it was perhaps inevitable that educated Jewish authors would find a connection between the various stories ¹⁶.

Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C.E. – 50 C.E.) wrote much on the Pentateuch, and aimed as much as possible to commend its faith to his Alexandrian audience. Philo is well known for his allegorical approach, and most scholars recognize that, at least in Philo's mind, this approach does not imply his rejection of historical referentiality (although to be sure, the historical element generally plays little role!). Philo's treatise *De Gigantibus*, on Genesis 6,1-4 (basically using the LXX) ¹⁷, denies that the "giants" (οἱ γίγαντες, for Hebrew *hannepîlîm*) have any connection to "the myths of the poets about the giants, but indeed myth-making is a thing most alien to" the Lawgiver (58). In *De Abrahamo*, 41-46, Philo summarizes the Genesis account of the great flood, sticking with the simple historical sense. Although his main source is surely the LXX, that does not supply all of his Greek terms ¹⁸. Finally, in his *De Praemiis et Poenis*, 23, Philo identifies Noah as the Hebrew name for the person the Greeks call Deucalion. F.H. Colson, the editor of the Loeb edition, considers this unique in all of Philo: "Though he often mentions Greek mythical personages, and not always with signs of disbelief ... , he nowhere equates them with Old Testament characters".

¹⁶ Of course it is always conceivable that the LXX translators chose their words with such connections in mind; at the same time, with the underlying Hebrew terms based on the root נחש, these are the right Greek words to choose.

¹⁷ There are slight variations from the received text of the LXX, the most important being Philo's οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ — the variant reading attested in Alexandrinus and a few scattered witnesses — for οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ (cf. MT) in v. 2. J.W. WEVERS, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis* (SBLSCS; Atlanta, GA 1993) 75-76, observes that the expression "son[s] of God" is rendered "angel[s] of God" elsewhere, but does not suggest that this is the original rendering here in LXX-Genesis.

¹⁸ For example, his word for "destroy", ἀφανίζω, does not appear in the LXX, though it does appear in Pseudo-Apollodorus (1.7.2), and in Plato (*Laws*, 678e); cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 1,99. He also amplifies the biblical account by saying that the flood would destroy, "not only those who dwelt in the plains and lower lands, but also the inhabitants of the highest mountains", which may be his own imaginative expansion, but does also seem to echo Plato's reference to "the cities in the plains and near the sea" (*Laws*, 677c).

Flavius Josephus (37 – some time after 100 C.E.) refers to the biblical flood Story in his *Antiquities* (1, 72-108 [1.3.1-9]) and in his *Against Apion* (1, 130 [1.19])¹⁹. He quotes from the accounts of the Gentile historians Berossus (*Antiq.* 1, 93; *Apion*, 1, 130) and Nicolaus of Damascus (*Antiq.* 1, 94-95), and mentions “Hieronymos the Egyptian, who composed an ancient history of Phoenicia, and Mnaseas and numerous others” for confirmation. As Feldman observes²⁰,

In summary, Josephus’ version of the Noah pericope, far from being a mere paraphrase of the Biblical narrative, whether based on the original Hebrew or on the Septuagint, shows careful and deliberate additions, modifications and subtractions, largely motivated by apologetic concerns, but arising from his aim to synthesize Jewish and Hellenistic culture.

One of the most noticeable features in Josephus’ account is that his word for the ark is consistently λάρναξ, rather than the term used in the LXX and Philo, κιβωτός. The Greek term does not come from Berossus, who mostly uses τὸ πλοῖον (“the boat”), as well as σκάφος and ναῦς. The word λάρναξ appears in the passages from Plutarch, Lucian, and Pseudo-Apollodorus listed above; but it looks like Josephus adopted it from the section in Nicolaus of Damascus that he quoted. Probably, then, Josephus intended to imply a parallel between Noah and Deucalion. Other indications that support the notion that Josephus followed an apologetic motive to display parallels include his connection of the “angels of God consorting with women” to the “outrages ... said by the Greeks to have been done by giants” (*Antiq.* 1, 73); his statement that “God suggested” (ὑποθεμένου ... τοῦ θεοῦ) the ark to Noah (*Antiq.* 1, 76), which is so similar to Pseudo-Apollodorus’ assertion that “Prometheus suggested” (ὑποθεμένου Προμηθέως) the building of an ark to Deucalion. Josephus’ indebtedness to Berossus appears

¹⁹ My discussion here benefits from several published works of L. Feldman, namely: *Josephus, Antiquities*, 24-39, with accompanying notes; “Josephus’ Portrait of Noah and Its Parallels in Philo, Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities*, and Rabbinic Midrashim”, *PAAJR* 55 (1988) 31-57; “Questions About the Great Flood, as Viewed by Philo, Pseudo-Philo, Josephus, and the Rabbis”, *ZAW* 115 (2003) 401-422; *Studies in Josephus’ Rewritten Bible* (Leiden 1998) 17-37; *Josephus’ Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley, CA 1998) 132-135.

²⁰ FELDMAN, “Josephus’ portrait of Noah and its parallels”, 56.

in his mention of a dove returning to Noah “smeared with mud” (πεπηλωμένη), echoing, not the Bible, but Berossus’ very wording: the birds returned “having their feet smeared with mud” (τοὺς πόδας πεπηλωμένους ἔχοντα).

Josephus has a number of interesting connections with Plato’s account in the *Laws* and *Timaeus* as well, some of which Feldman has already pointed out. For example, Josephus tells us that Adam “predicted that there would be an extermination of the universe, at one time by a violent fire and at another time by a force with an abundance of water” (*Antiq.* 1,70), which Feldman finds evocative of Plato’s *Timaeus*, 22c, regarding the “many and divers destructions of mankind, of which the greatest are by fire and water”. Of course, Josephus connects these destructions to human sin, which makes him closer to Ovid (not to mention the Mesopotamians) than to Plato. Further, Josephus (*Antiq.* 1,109) has people descending from the mountain regions to the plains (εἰς τὰ πεδία) after the flood and persuading others who are fearful to leave the highlands (ἀπὸ τῶν ὑψηλῶν τόπων), a detail that the Bible lacks but that appears in Plato’s flood story (*Laws*, 678b), which speaks of those who feared going down “from the highlands to the plains” (ἐκ τῶν ὑψηλῶν εἰς τὰ πεδία). Another point of terminology comes from Josephus’ use of the term διασώζω for the “saving” of Noah and his family (e.g., *Antiq.* 1,78.89; *Against Apion*, 1,130), a word absent from Genesis LXX and present in Plato (677b)²¹. We may add to Feldman’s list another term, namely διαφθείρω for God’s activity of “destroying” people, again a term absent from Genesis (which uses the cognate καταφθείρω) but present in Plato (e.g., *Laws*, 677c) as well as in Pseudo-Apollodorus (see above). Feldman’s explanation for these parallels, both with the Mesopotamian stories and with the Greek ones, seems promising: Josephus wrote with apologetic intent, especially to assure his audience that the biblical story was about real events.

The *Sibylline Oracles*, Book 1, recounts the early chapters of Genesis. It is a Jewish production (with probable Christian redaction) in the garb of Graeco-Roman prophecies. The Jewish substrate

²¹ It is at least conceivable that Josephus has used this word under the influence of Wisdom 14:5, but in view of the other factors here, it seems most likely that Josephus derived his wording from Plato himself.

seems to date from before 70 B.C.E.²², and to have come from Phrygia, since it has Noah's ark landing there (1:262). In addition to the LXX, and possibly Jewish sources such as the tales represented in 1 Enoch, it appears that in framing history as four declining ages the author followed the structure of Hesiod's *Works and Days*; the mention of the "giants" (1:124) is similar to what we saw in Ovid and in Josephus above. Of interest for this study is the way God commands Noah (1:129) to "preach repentance" (κήρυξον μετάνοιαν), an idea picked up by other Jewish and early Christian writers (see below on Theophilus and 2 Peter).

The Apocryphal books contain several references to Noah and the flood, most of them being incidental. For example, Wisdom 10,4, in a list of people whom personified Wisdom helped, tells us:

When the earth was flooded because of him, wisdom again saved (ἔσωσεν) it, steering the righteous man by a paltry piece of wood.

A little later, in a context about how sailors must rely on God for a safe journey rather than foolish wooden idols (14,1-11), we find this (14,3-6):

- (3) but it is your providence (πρόνοια), O Father, that steers its course, because you have given it a path in the sea, and a safe way through the waves,
- (4) showing that you can save (σώζειν) from every danger, so that even if a man lacks skill, he may put to sea.
- (5) It is your will that works of your wisdom should not be without effect; therefore men trust their lives even to the smallest piece of wood, and passing through the billows on a raft (σχεδία) they come safely to land (διδεσώθησαν).
- (6) For even in the beginning, when arrogant giants were perishing (ἀπολλυμένων ὑπερηφάνων γιγάντων), the hope of the world took refuge on a raft (ἐπὶ σχεδίας), and guided by your hand left to the world the seed of a new generation.

²² See J.J. COLLINS, "Sibylline Oracles", *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J. CHARLESWORTH) (Garden City, NY 1983) I, 330-334.

There are elements that are by now familiar: the LXX is the main source, but with the use of additional terms due to the argumentative needs of the context, such as terms related to σώζω “save”. The “giants” (14,6) reflect what we found in Josephus²³. Calling the ark a “raft” (σχεδία) is unique, but it is driven by the contextual mention of a raft (14,5)²⁴. Certainly the term “providence” (πρόνοια, 14:3) is one that Second Temple Jewish writers co-opted from Hellenistic philosophy to express what they thought was a biblical idea, but we cannot isolate a particular text as its source. Thus the variations from LXX terminology seem to stem from the poetic needs of the author; at the same time, we cannot rule out other sources, such as Plato, for some of the wording.

Third Maccabees 2,4-5 mentions the flood, followed by the judgment on Sodom²⁵:

(4) You destroyed those who in the past committed injustice (ἀδικίαν), among whom were even giants (γίγαντες) who trusted in their strength and boldness, whom you destroyed (διέφθειρας) by bringing upon them a boundless flood. (5) You consumed with fire and sulphur the men of Sodom who acted arrogantly, who were notorious for their vices; and you made them an example to those who should come afterward.

Verse 4 mentions the “giants”, connecting them (like Wis 14,6) to the evildoers in the Genesis flood story; it also mentions the doing of “injustice” (ἀδικία), drawing from Genesis 6,11.13 (LXX). Interestingly, the term “destroyed” is διέφθειρας, cognate to the LXX καταφθείρω (which renders Hebrew נִשְׁחַד); this is the cognate found in other flood tales outside the LXX.

Ben Sira also mentions Noah and his flood in passing (40,10; 44,17-18), and generally follows the Hebrew and LXX usage. Sim-

²³ The reference to the giants “perishing” (using ἀπόλλυμι) is a departure, and this verb appears also in Plato’s flood story (*Laws*, 677c), although not of giants.

²⁴ Some have drawn a parallel between the use of διασώζω (14,5) and what we find in Josephus and in 1 Pet 3,20; see, e.g., G. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London 1963) 259. The connection seems less likely, since Wisdom is not at this point talking about the flood.

²⁵ A sequence that also appears in Wis 10,4-7; cf. Sir 16,7-8, where the Greek mentions the “giants”, while the Hebrew calls them “princes”. The author of 2 Pet 2,4-8 uses this sequence.

ilarly Tobit 4,12 simply mentions Noah among other patriarchal figures; and 4 Maccabees 15,31 mentions the ark (κιβωτός), stressing its function as an image of endurance. Since connecting the biblical flood with any other account is not the goal of these passages, they add nothing to the present study.

There is evidence that Jews living in Asia Minor brought about an interaction between the biblical flood story and native flood traditions. This is already visible in the way that *Sibylline Oracles*, Book 1, had Noah land in Phrygia. Paul Trebilco has presented evidence that favors the conclusion that there were several traditions of a great flood in Phrygia; these traditions did not depend on the biblical tale. Nevertheless, coins from the city of Apamea Kibotos in Phrygia, minted in the late second century C.E. and depicting a scene of Noah and his ark, indicate “that the Jewish community did not create the local legend but rather reinterpreted it and that its version was accepted by the city”²⁶.

But Trebilco finds further evidence of this Jewish community bringing the biblical story of a great flood into interaction with the local traditions, namely the *Sibylline Oracles*, Books 1-2; as mentioned above, *Sib. Or.* 1:262 has Noah’s ark landing in Phrygia. Trebilco goes on to argue²⁷,

The use of Hesiod [in the *Sibylline Oracles*], and indeed of the Sibylline form itself, emphasises the common ground between Jew and Gentile in the author’s context, which as we have seen is probably Apamea. (...) It seems likely that the Sibyl was aiming his/her work at the city, at those who knew only the local flood story. (...) The use of the Sibylline form and the incorporation of Hesiod were designed to increase the attractiveness of the book for Gentile readers and thus to further this apologetic aim.

In general, then, Second Temple Jewish authors with an apologetic stance in relation to the Graeco-Roman world do not outright reject the Gentile flood stories, but instead draw parallels with them. They do so to provide further reason for believing the his-

²⁶ P.R. TREBILCO, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (SNTSMS; Cambridge 1991) 85-103; quotation from 94. HILHORST, “The Noah Story”, 63-65, declares Trebilco’s case “a strong one”.

²⁷ TREBILCO, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 96, 97, 98.

toricity of the biblical account, and to commend Jewish faith by showing how it connects to what the authors take to be the best aspects of the Gentile culture.

III. References to non-biblical flood stories in Patristic sources

A number of early Christian authors (outside the New Testament) make incidental mention of the Gentile flood stories, but the most important ones for this study are Justin Martyr (*Second Apology*, mid 2nd century C.E.), Theophilus of Antioch (later 2nd century C.E.), Origen (*Contra Celsum*, mid 3rd century C.E.), Eusebius of Caesarea (*Preparation for the Gospel*, early 4th century C.E.), and Augustine (*City of God*, early 5th century C.E.)²⁸.

Justin Martyr mentions the flood story a number of times in his *Dialogue with Trypho*²⁹, but the interesting place for our purposes comes in his *Second Apology*, 7.2. As part of the evidence that Christians are the reason God preserves the world, he recounts:

even as formerly the flood left no one but him only with his family who is by us called Noah, and by you Deucalion (παρ' ἡμῖν καλούμενον Νῶε, παρ' ὑμῖν δὲ Δευκαλίωνα), from whom again such vast numbers have sprung, some of them evil and others good.

Theophilus of Antioch, in his work *For Autolycus*, makes the same identification. In Book 2, in the course of recounting the story of Genesis, he uses similar wording to Justin's: "And what relates to Noah, who is called by some Deucalion" (τὰ δὲ περὶ τοῦ Νῶε, ὃς κέκληται

²⁸ In addition to CADUFF's (*Antike Sintflutsagen*) compilation, notable discussions of the topic of Patristic authors who correlate the Genesis flood story with the other stories include J. DANÉLOU, *From Shadows to Reality. Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* (Westminster, MD 1960) 69-102; J.P. LEWIS, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden 1968) 100-120; J. PÉPIN, *De la philosophie ancienne à la théologie patristique* (London 1986) essay viii, 17-18; N. COHN, *Noah's Flood. The Genesis Story in Western Thought* (New Haven, CT 1996) 23-31; H.S. BENJAMINS, "Noah, the Ark, and the Flood in Early Christian Theology: The Ship of the Church in the Making", *Interpretations of the Flood* (eds. F. GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ – G.P. LUTTIKHUIZEN) (Leiden 1999) 134-149.

²⁹ Justin uses Noah in this *Dialogue* primarily to show that one need not be a Jew to be counted righteous (cf. §§19, 20, 44, etc.).

ὑπὸ ἑνίων Δευκαλίων) ³⁰. Later, in Book 3, Theophilus aims to show that Christians have the true history. In §§18-19, he particularly corrects the Greek flood stories. For example, he takes issue with Plato's version of the story, since Plato "said that [the flood] extended not over the whole earth, but only over the plains, and that those who fled to the highest hills preserved themselves (τοὺς διαφυγόντας ἐπὶ τοῖς ὑψηλοτάτοις ὄρεσιν αὐτοὺς διασεσῶσθαι)", no doubt referring to the account in Plato's *Laws* ³¹.

Theophilus then mentions Deucalion and Pyrrha, "preserved in a chest" (ἐν λάρνακι διασεσῶσθαι), with the story of their casting stones behind them to repopulate the world with "people" (λαοί). This sounds like the version of the story that Pseudo-Apollodorus tells, with its term for the "ark" and its explanation of how the name "people" (λαοί) comes from the word "stone" (λᾶας). However, Theophilus does not reproduce the Greek word play, nor does he use the same expressions for what Deucalion did with the stones: according to Theophilus, he "cast stones behind him" (λίθους εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω πεπομφέναι), while in Pseudo-Apollodorus he "took up stones and threw them over his head" (ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς ἔβαλλεν αἶρων λίθους). Hence we cannot say that Theophilus must have known the exact wording we have in Pseudo-Apollodorus. (After all, Ovid's version, *Metamorphoses* 1:390 and following, is similar, which indicates that this particular story was known before Pseudo-Apollodorus wrote.)

Theophilus' main goal is to insist that Moses' tale of the great flood is more reliable than that of others, whether they be about Deucalion, or about other floods with other heroes. Hence he repeats from Genesis that eight human lives were "preserved in the ark" (ἐν τῇ κιβωτῷ διασεσῶσθαι), using Plato's word for "preserve" and the LXX word for the "ark". At the same time, he does (perhaps ironically) allow that "Deucalion" (Δευκαλίων) is a fitting second name

³⁰ While both Justin and Theophilus use καλέω "to call", Philo uses ἐπονομάζω (*De Praemiis et Poenis*, 23); hence though the idea is similar, there is no evidence of direct literary dependence of the Christian Fathers on Philo here.

³¹ Cf. Plato, *Laws*, 677b, "those who escaped (περιφυγόντες) would have been herdsmen of the hills (ὄρειοι) ... preserved (διασεσωσμένα) somewhere on the mountain-tops". We can allow variation of the two compound verbs, περιφεύγω (Plato) and διαφεύγω (Theophilus), effectively synonymous in these contexts.

for Noah, playing on words: “Come (δεῦτε), God calls (καλεῖ) you to repentance”³².

Origen writes of the great flood in his apologetic refuting the work of Celsus, who had apparently taken the Christians to task for getting the flood story of Deucalion wrong³³. Celsus seems also to have cited Plato, *Timaeus*, 22c-d, to the effect that “there have been many conflagrations from all eternity and many floods, and that the deluge which lately happened in the time of Deucalion was the most recent” (cf. also *Laws*, 677a). Origen allows that both the Noah and Deucalion stories are about the same events, though he is of course clear that Moses has told it truly.

The church historian Eusebius of Caesarea, in his *Preparation for the Gospel*, aims to show that the Gentile flood stories supply a confirmation to the biblical version³⁴. He mentions the floods associated with Ogygos and with Deucalion (see 10.9-10 [486c, 488d, 489b]). He includes (9.11 [414a-c]) quotations from Josephus’ *Antiquities*, citing the ancient historians Berossus, Hieronymus, Mnaseas, and Nicolaus (see above); he adds to these a passage from the historian Abydenus (perhaps 2nd century B.C.E.), who recounts the Mesopotamian flood story of Sisithrus (cf. Xisuthros in Berossus); Eusebius considers this to be about the same events. Particularly interesting for our purposes is the way Eusebius draws on Plato’s flood story in his *Laws*, and then goes on to liken it to the Mosaic account (11.15 [588b]):

Just as Moses appends to the history after the flood the civil state of the godly Hebrews of old, in like manner Plato also, next to the lives of those who followed the flood, tries to describe the ancient times of Greek history, as Moses does of the Hebrews, mentioning the Trojan war, and the first constitution of Lacedaemon, and the Persians, and those who had lived among these events whether well

³² Cf. *Sibylline Oracles*, 1:129, where God tells Noah, κήρυξον μετάνοιαν ὅπως σωθῶσιν ἅπαντες “proclaim repentance, that all might be saved”; in 1 Clement 7,6, Νῶε ἐκήρυξεν μετάνοιαν καὶ οἱ ὑπακούσαντες ἐσώθησαν “Noah proclaimed repentance and those who listened were saved”.

³³ Citing from Origen, *Contra Celsum* (ed. H. CHADWICK) (Cambridge 1965). See 1:19; 4:11, 41-42.

³⁴ The English translation is based on the edition of Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* (trans. E.H. Gifford) (Oxford 1903).

or ill: and then after the narration of these things he begins his arrangement of the laws, following Moses in this also.

Like other Church Fathers, Eusebius considered Moses to be the source of the wisdom Plato had. Here it is plain that Eusebius connects the Platonic story to the Mosaic one. Eusebius, then, agrees with Josephus in finding both the Mesopotamian and the Platonic versions of the flood to be parallel to the Mosaic one.

In his *City of God*, 18.8, 10, Augustine draws on the Roman historian Marcus Terentius Varro (1st century B.C.E.) as a witness to the historicity of the disastrous flood associated with Deucalion, apparently agreeing with Eusebius' connection of this flood with the biblical event.

As a general rule, Christian authors make parallels between the biblical story and the Gentile stories for the same reasons the Second Temple Jewish authors do, namely with an apologetic end in view. By way of contrast, Chrysostom, in his *Homilies on Genesis*, simply sticks to the biblical text, without mentioning the pagan stories at all. Apparently he did not feel pressure here to make apologetic moves.

IV. Analysis of the New Testament evidence

From the materials surveyed already, it readily appears that at least some Second Temple Jewish and early Christian authors considered the stories of Noah, Deucalion, and Sisuthros to be about the same persons and events. Certainly they would resolve any case of disagreement in favor of the biblical story; but it served apologetic aims to show the connections between the various traditions. Further, these sources seem to have been aware of Plato's version of the Deucalion story — whether directly from Plato or in a form influenced by him.

I have already acknowledged that no New Testament author makes explicit mention of any other source for the flood story than the Bible. Hence, any indications of a connection will come from indirect clues, such as vocabulary. This, however, is just what Feldman found in the case of Josephus' allusions to Plato's story.

Kurt Aland's *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* presents Matthew 24,37-39 as a synoptic parallel to Luke 17,26-27. While there is indeed

much overlap between them, there are also variations, but such discussion need not delay us here. The two texts agree in adding (reasonably) to the biblical account the detail about people carrying on their normal lives, heedless of their danger. They also deviate from LXX wording when they describe the destruction wrought by the flood: “the flood came and swept them all away [ἦρεν]” (Matt 24,39); “the flood came and destroyed [ἀπώλεσεν] them all” (Luke 17,27). Neither of the verbs, αἶρω and ἀπόλλυμι, appears in the LXX version of the Noah story; but neither is, on its own, a surprising paraphrase.

The case of Hebrews 11,7 is similar. There Noah “constructed an ark for the saving of his household” (κατεσκεύασεν κιβωτὸν εἰς σωτηρίαν τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ). Though the LXX does not use the words “constructed” (κατασκευάζω) and “saving” (σωτηρία), nor does the Hebrew supply any that might be rendered that way, these terms are still reasonable as a paraphrase of the account. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 1, 76-77, also writes of how God suggested to Noah a “means for salvation” (πόρον πρὸς σωτηρίαν), namely that he “constructed an ark” (λάρνακα κατασκευάσας)³⁵.

The Petrine letters present a different situation, where the variations from LXX wording seem to indicate that the readers should recognize allusions to non-biblical flood stories. I will begin with 2 Peter, and then go on to 1 Peter. The actual authorship of these letters is controversial; even though traditionalists attribute them both to Peter the Apostle, many moderns, including relatively traditional ones who connect 1 Peter to Peter himself, consider them the products of separate authors³⁶. Al-

³⁵ FELDMAN, *Josephus, Antiquities*, 29 n. 184, notes that Lucian likewise uses the term σωτηρία for Deucalion’s “salvation”. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that Lucian influenced Josephus (who wrote earlier), or that Josephus influenced the author of Hebrews. It is possible that the cognate noun κατασκευή “construction” was in Philo’s original Greek of his *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 2.1, regarding the construction of the ark and of the human body (so Ralph Marcus’ note on the Loeb edition, based on the Armenian version). Even so, the author of Hebrews uses the verb κατασκευάζω enough times in the whole of his book (3,3.4; 9,2.6) that without other indications we may simply put this down to his own preference. Further, this verb is apparently common in descriptions of ship building and outfitting (so BDAG, s.v. κατασκευάζω, 2.)

³⁶ E.g., J.N.D. KELLY, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (Black’s New Testament Commentaries; London 1969) and R. BAUCKHAM, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC; Waco, TX 1983), who nevertheless allow for some connection with Peter in Rome (even if it might be tenuous).

though exploring that question is well outside the scope of this essay, perhaps the results here will contribute to future discussions.

Second Peter refers to the great flood in two places, namely in 2,5 and 3,5-6. The context of 2,4-6 indicates that the events in Genesis are the background for the account. The author moves from mention of the “angels when they sinned”, probably meaning the “sons of God” (Gen 6,1-4), to the great flood (Gen. 6-9), to Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19,23-29)³⁷. At the same time, there are indications that other ways of telling the stories may also be involved: 2 Peter 2,4 says that when the angels sinned God “cast them into hell [Tartarus]” (ταρταρώσας), an element not found in Genesis³⁸. In 2 Peter 2,5 we find that God brought the flood upon the world of the ungodly (ἀσεβῶν), using a term not found in the LXX of the flood story³⁹. Calling Noah a “herald of righteousness” (δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα) brings to mind the way in which *Sibylline Oracles* 1:129 has God instructing Noah to “proclaim or herald repentance” (κήρυξον μετάνοιαν); the perceived connection becomes stronger in view of the mention of “repentance” in 2 Peter 3,9. Finally, in 2 Peter 2,6 God “turned to ashes” (τεφρώσας) Sodom and Gomorrah, a detail also lacking from the LXX. The differences in vv. 5 and 6 might be explained by the author’s paraphrase, but the reference to Tartarus in v. 4, together with the explicit “angels”, invite us to connect this with a tradition of reading.

³⁷ This juxtaposition reminds us of the pattern that 3 Macc 2,4-5 displays.

³⁸ Perhaps this echoes *Sib. Or.*, 1:100, where members of the “second race” who went wrong “went under the dread house of Tartarus” (ἐμολον ὑπὸ ταρτάριον δόμον αἰνόν); cf. further 1:119 (members of the fourth race). But the passage also reminds us of the story of how the Olympian gods punished the Titans in Tartarus (cf. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 715-40); see J. NEYREY, *2 Peter, Jude* (AB; New York 1993) 202; C. SPICQ, *Les Épîtres de Saint Pierre* (SB; Paris 1966) 231. For Jewish awareness of this story, see Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2, 240 [2.34]. See the sensible caution of D.A. CARSON, “2 Peter”, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (eds. G.K. BEALE – D.A. CARSON) (Grand Rapids, MI 2007) 1047-1061, at 1050b: “This may be nothing more than the vocabulary choice of someone influenced by Hellenistic Judaism; it is hard to be sure, for already the word is used in the LXX”. Nevertheless the point stands, that the LXX of Genesis is not the sole source for wording here.

³⁹ The first occurrence of ἀσεβής or ἀσέβεια is in Gen 18,23, to render Hebrew עשׂר (which is also the first occurrence of that Hebrew word).

In 2 Peter 3,5-6 we find similar indications that more factors than the LXX lie behind the New Testament author's presentation. In v. 5 he reminds us, "the earth was formed [or, put together, συνεστῶσα] out of water and through water". It is mysterious exactly what he means by water as a material, but the term "formed" / "put together" (συνίστημι) is not used in the LXX for the notion of divine creation and preservation, though it does appear in Hellenistic philosophers with this idea, as early as Plato (e.g., *Timaeus*, 31b, 32c; *Republic*, 530a). Apparently Second Temple Jewish and early Christian writers adopted this term from the philosophers as a way of expressing biblical ideas ⁴⁰.

The use of συνίστημι in 2 Peter 3,5 raises the question of whether the non-LXX ἀπόλλυμι in v. 6 ("the world that then existed ... perished [ἀπώλετο]") alludes to a non-biblical source. The verb itself is common enough in the New Testament, occurring about 90 times; and in Genesis 18,28 the LXX uses it to render Hebrew נָפַח "to destroy or corrupt", which appears in the Hebrew of Genesis 6,11 etc., generally rendered in the LXX with cognates of φθείρω "to corrupt". However, the philosophical term is not the only evidence of non-biblical allusions: in v. 9 the Lord is "not wishing that any should perish [ἀπολέσθαι], but that all should reach repentance [εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι]". The mention of repentance, in a context that is certainly showing a parallel between the judgment in the great flood and the judgment when the Lord comes, evokes *Sibylline Oracles* 1:129 (see above, on 2 Peter 2,5 and Theophilus, 3.19).

The verb ἀπόλλυμι for the perishing of culture and persons in the great flood occurs in Plato's account (*Laws*, 677c), and also in Wisdom 14,6 (see above). The collocation with συνίστημι, a term also found in Plato, suggests that an account like that in Plato is the ultimate source of the allusion in 2 Peter 3,5-6, whatever the mediate source might be.

There are other possible allusions to Plato's account, though these are more faint. For example, 2 Peter 3,4 pictures the scoffers as saying, "For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were [πάντα οὕτως διαμένει] from the beginning of creation". This is slightly reminiscent of Plato's denial that "things had

⁴⁰ For a fuller discussion, see C.J. COLLINS, "Colossians 1:17, 'Hold together': A co-opted term with a punch", forthcoming.

continued all that time ordered just as they are now [ἔμμενε τάδε οὕτω τὸν πάντα χρόνον ὥς νῦν διακεκόσμηται]” (*Laws*, 677c). The reminiscence is more at the level of the thought than the specific words, though the cognate verbs μένω and διαμένω and the adverb οὕτως do establish some points of contact. Again, 2 Peter 1,4 calls his readers people who “have escaped from the corruption [ἀποφυγόντες τῆς ... φθορᾶς] that is in the world because of sinful desire”. Perhaps this echoes the phrase from Plato, which describes the survivors of the flood as “those who escaped destruction/corruption” (οἱ περιφυγόντες τὴν φθοράν, *Laws*, 677b)⁴¹; if so, 2 Peter is drawing a typological connection between the escape from the flood and the greater escape from sin’s defilement and inevitable punishment. These would not even enter into our consideration as allusions, except for the suggestive echoes elsewhere in the letter.

This connection to the Platonic account appears as well in 1 Peter 3,20 (perhaps by way of Wisdom 14). There we read that Noah’s “ark was being prepared” (κατασκευαζομένης κιβωτοῦ), with wording like that in Hebrews 11,7; and Wisdom 14,2 had used the verb κατασκευάζω for ship-building in a context that eventually goes on to speak of Noah’s ark. But 1 Peter also mentions that eight people “were brought safely through” (διεσώθησαν) the water, using a verb that appears in Plato (*Timaeus*, 22d; *Laws*, 677b) and in texts influenced by his account (which may be true of Wis 14,5)⁴².

Even if the verbal echoes seem to point toward an allusion to non-biblical sources, and especially to Plato, we must certainly face the problem of whether such an allusion is plausible. The following lines of argument make it reasonable to allow for an allusion in the Petrine letters to a version of the flood story that owes its ultimate origin to Plato’s telling of the story. First, as several researchers have shown, Jews in the Hellenistic world were acquainted with Plato; not only was Philo familiar with him, as was the author of Wisdom of Solomon (a work more popular than Philo’s, and more representative of mainstream Judaism),

⁴¹ Observe the effective synonymy of the cognate verbs ἀποφεύγω and περιφεύγω, a phenomenon that we also noted above in Theophilus.

⁴² A commentator such as SPICQ, *Les Épîtres de Saint Pierre*, 141, simply notes that the verb is suited to being brought safely through in a nautical situation (Acts 27,43–44; 28,1.4; Wis 14,5); that is of course true, but when taken with other factors the connection with Plato’s flood account becomes worthy of investigation.

but so also was Josephus⁴³. Second, as already mentioned above, the Gentile inhabitants of Asia Minor knew several flood stories, and Jewish authors deliberately brought the biblical story into contact with these native traditions when this would help to commend Jewish faith to the Gentiles there. Third, these first two lines of argument converge in their relevance to interpreting the Petrine letters. These letters do indicate that they address people in Asia Minor (explicit in 1 Pet 1,1; implicit in 2 Pet 3,1)⁴⁴, and thus the presence of native flood stories comes into view. Further, there is evidence that 2 Peter makes use of Hellenistic terminology and ideas elsewhere in the book⁴⁵.

The final test for the likelihood of an intentional allusion is whether it sheds interpretive light on the Petrine letters. The best hint on that account comes from the way in which other Jewish and early Christian writers have connected the biblical flood story with the Gentile versions, namely the apologetic and point-of-contact motif. Karen Jobes, drawing on Trebilco's work on the Jewish communities of Asia Minor, and noting that 1 Peter is addressed to Christians in that area, suggests that 1 Peter "3:19-21 is intended to connect the cultural heritage of the region to which Peter writes with the Christian faith of his readers living there". She goes on to explain⁴⁶,

Noah's flood was an OT event that displayed God's salvation of the righteous few and his judgment on, and destruction of, an entire society that refused to repent. It was, and still remains, a type of the eschatological judgment that has been fulfilled in Christ but yet still looks to the future for its consummation in history. ... Peter's readers will be among those who escape the second "flood" of judgment because they have already passed through the waters of Christian baptism ...

⁴³ See, e.g., HADAS, *Hellenistic Culture*, 72-82; L. FELDMAN, "Josephus' Portrait of Noah and Its Parallels in Philo, Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, and Rabbinic Midrashim", 40 n. 15; D.J. LADOUCEUR, "Masada: A consideration of the literary evidence", *GRBS* 21 (1980) 245-260, at 250-251 for the likely influence of Plato on a couple of speeches in Josephus.

⁴⁴ On 2 Pet 3,1 as a reference to 1 Peter, see BAUCKHAM, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 285-286.

⁴⁵ See, for example, BAUCKHAM, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 179-182, on "partakers of the divine nature" (1,4).

⁴⁶ K.H. JOBES, *1 Peter* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI 2005) 252.

To put it another way, the author of 1 Peter aims to foster Christian endurance by helping his readers to connect their sense of being heirs of an ancient great escape to their reception of God's redemptive activity in Jesus.

Second Peter seems pretty clearly to show a similar aim. In fact, the context of the first flood allusion (2 Pet 2,4-5) makes the lesson explicit: If God did all these things recorded in Genesis (2 Pet 2,4-8), "then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment" (v. 9). Likewise in 2 Peter 3, the same God who made the world and judged it by the great flood is fully able to bring his final judgment at the appointed time. The delay is not because God is slow, but — like the delay with the great flood — is due to God's merciful wish for people to come to repentance. The author makes his behavioral goal plain when he asks, "What sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?" (2 Pet 3,11). To connect the biblical story with the Gentile stories can serve to enhance the readers' feeling for the reality of the ancient events, and thus to strengthen their resolve for the present and future.

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Jewish authors in the Second Temple period, as well as early Christian authors after the New Testament, made connections between the biblical story of Noah and Gentile stories of the flood, including Greek stories involving Deucalion. They did this when their apologetic purpose called for it, namely to show the actuality of the biblical events (and sometimes to correct the Gentile ways of telling the story). A prominent version of the Deucalion story appears in Plato, and these Jewish and Christian authors show some familiarity with that version of the story. Indeed, Plato's use of terms that resonate with the LXX account, such as φθορά "destruction" and διαφθείρω "destroy or corrupt", invites the connection.

Although the New Testament authors never make an outright allusion to the Gentile flood stories, they do use wording that allows a knowledgeable reader to discern an allusion. Evidence from the textual and historical contexts of these "discerned allusions" in 1 and 2 Peter suggests that the authors intended them. At any rate they certainly provided a ground for their successors in early Christianity to go ahead and make the connections explicit.

Finally, although the question of authorship and provenance of 1 and 2 Peter lies outside the goals of this study, it must strike one as interesting that both letters seem to allude to Gentile versions of the flood story, and especially to Plato's. At the very least this supports the notion of a close conceptual and argumentative association between the two letters.

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SUMMARY

Jewish authors in the Second Temple period, as well as early Christian authors after the New Testament, made apologetically-motivated connections between the biblical story of Noah and Gentile stories of the flood, including Greek stories involving Deucalion — most notably Plato's version. Analysis of the New Testament letters attributed to Peter indicates that these also allude to the Gentile flood stories, likely in order to enhance their readers' sense of the reality of the biblical events.

Reading the Earliest Copies of 2 Peter

The three earliest extant copies of the Second Letter of Peter are found in the following manuscripts: Papyrus 72 — third century; Codex Sinaiticus — fourth century; and Codex Vaticanus — fourth century¹.

These and other early copies of 2 Peter have been studied intensively in the effort to determine the earliest recoverable text of 2 Peter, and many of the differences among them have been identified in critical texts of the New Testament. The results of such text criticism are now taken as the beginning point for the interpretation of 2 Peter. Text criticism, however, divides manuscripts into variation units and to a great extent considers them piecemeal, not as a whole. Thus much less attention has been given to reading these manuscripts in their entirety and to the meaning of a particular manuscript's various readings taken together.

There have been efforts to see how the perspective of their scribes is reflected in manuscripts. Such efforts might be expected to yield interpretation of the manuscripts as a whole, but generally this has not been the result. Attempting to identify the outlook of the scribes has required distinguishing any changes introduced by the scribes from what they found in the texts they copied. This is the procedure followed by Bart Ehrman in *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*². This procedure yields an interpretation of certain features of the manuscripts, but not the manuscripts as a whole.

¹ A facsimile of the P⁷² text of 1 and 2 Peter accompanies C. M. MARTINI ed., *Beati Petri Apostoli Epistulae. Ex Papyro Bodmeriana VIII Transcriptae* (Milan 1968); a facsimile of Codex Sinaiticus has been published as *Codex Sinaiticus. A Facsimile* (Peabody, MA 2011) and is available on line at <http://www.codex-sinaiticus.net/en/>; a facsimile of the Codex Vaticanus New Testament has been published as *Ē Kainē Diathēkē. phototypice expressus iussu Pauli PP. VI.* (Civitate Vaticana 1965); a facsimile of the complete Codex Vaticanus has been published as *Bibliorum Sacrorum Graecorum Codex Vaticanus B* (Rome 1999).

² B. EHRLMAN, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture. The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York, NY – Oxford 1993) 31. This is also the approach taken by J. R. ROYSE in *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (New Testament Tools,

The title of Eldon Jay Epp's *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* suggests that it is an analysis of Acts as found in Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis. However, that is not exactly the case. Rather, Epp's actual goal was to identify theological tendencies of the "Western" tradition insofar as it is accessible from Codex Bezae. This involved discounting elements of the text that arose later than the second century³.

Although little attention has been given to understanding early manuscripts as a whole, this is worth investigating. During the first 1400 years of Christian history, before there were printed copies of the New Testament, it was available only in manuscripts. During this period most of the people in any given place probably did not have access to more than one copy of any biblical writing. As far as they were concerned, their copy simply was the writing⁴. Since no two manuscripts of any writing agree with one another in every respect, readers' understanding of these writings would have varied as their copies of them varied. This makes it interesting to ask how readers would have understood the earliest copies of 2 Peter. How would their understanding of it have varied because of the differences among these copies?

In what follows I will discuss each of the three earliest copies of 2 Peter in turn and consider what 2 Peter would have meant to the readers of each one. My concern will be the meaning of the manuscripts as they stand. For this purpose it does not matter whether the distinctive features of the manuscripts were produced by the scribes who wrote them or were found already in their exemplars. I will identify the most significant textual features of these copies of 2 Peter by comparing them with the text of 2 Peter in *The Greek New Testament*. Fourth Revised Edition⁵. This is what I

Studies and Documents 36; Leiden – Boston, MA 2008) when he discusses the theological changes introduced by the scribes of papyrus manuscripts.

³E.J. Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (SNTSMS 3; Cambridge 1966) 27-28. Epp provides a review of subsequent investigations on the same lines in "Anti-Judaic Tendencies in the D-Text of Acts: Forty Years of Conversation", in *Id.*, *Perspectives on NT Textual Criticism*. Collected Essays 1962-2004 (NTS 116; Leiden 2005) 699-739.

⁴Cf. Epp's, *Theological Tendency*, 13, statement that "these variant texts were for some Christians at some time and place the 'original' text".

⁵B. ALAND et al. (eds.), *The Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart 1993).

mean when I refer to the probable or likely original text ⁶. In discussing the earliest copies of 2 Peter, I will discuss the meaning of 2 Peter as found in the corrected texts. The one exception is that where possible, I will interpret the text marked with dots. I do so because marking the text with dots does not eliminate it as completely as other methods of correction; the dotted text is still there to be read.

Reading the corrected text is quite straightforward in the case of Papyrus 72 and Codex Vaticanus. As we will see below, almost all of the corrections of 2 Peter in Papyrus 72 seem to have been made by the original hand, and there are very few corrections of 2 Peter in Codex Vaticanus. The case of Codex Sinaiticus is different. In this manuscript there are many corrections of the text of 2 Peter. While some of them seem to have been made before the text left the scriptorium, a number of them seem to have been made much later. Even so, the corrected text of Codex Sinaiticus is one of the earliest copies of 2 Peter.

I. Papyrus 72

Like the other early copies of 2 Peter we are considering, the one found in P⁷² was part of a codex; Tommy Wasserman calls it the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex ⁷. Unlike the other codices containing early copies of 2 Peter, the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex was a papyrus codex. The pages of this codex are also smaller than those of the other codices that contain early copies of 2 Peter; they measure 6"×5.5", about half the size of the other codices' pages (though the latter also differ considerably in size). Each page has a single column of text. In 2 Peter the pages mostly have 17-19 lines of text. The size of the codex suggests that it was produced for private use rather than for public reading in the church.

The most important difference between the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex and the other codices we are considering is that the former is

⁶ On the complexity of the term "original text" see E.J. EPP, "The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text' in New Testament Textual Criticism", EPP, *Perspectives on NT Textual Criticism*, 551-593.

⁷ T. WASSERMAN, "Papyrus 72 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex", ID., *The Epistle of Jude. Its Text and Transmission* (ConB NTS 43; Stockholm 2006) 30-50.

not a biblical codex. As the name suggests, the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex contains a miscellany of eleven writings, probably written by four different scribes, bound together in the following order:

Nativity of Mary
 3 Corinthians
 11th Ode of Solomon
 Jude
 Melito, Homily on the Passover
 Fragment of a liturgical hymn
 Apology of Phileas
 LXX Psalms 33,2–34,16
 1-2 Peter

Readers of this early copy of 2 Peter would not have been informed by the codex in which they found it that they were reading part of the Bible. They may have known in other ways that this text was an authoritative writing for the Christian church, but they read it in an anthology of various writings. Some of them are biblical writings (Jude, Psalms 33,2–34,16, 1-2 Peter), but others are not.

1. *The Work of the Scribe*

P⁷² is the name given to the texts of Jude, 1 and 2 Peter that are part of this codex. All were written by the same scribe. This scribe was much less skilled than the scribes who wrote the other early copies of 2 Peter we are considering. Someone who recognized the scribe's many errors would have received the impression that the writer of 2 Peter was not highly literate in Greek. I count 131 itacisms and other errors based on replacing a letter or letters with similar sounding letters ⁸.

There are also cases of simple misspellings, where a single letter is used in place of a double letter (Γομορας 2,6; ἐρυσσας 2,7; φυλασσεσθαι 3,17) or a double letter used in place of a single letter (μαλλιστα 2,10; Βαλλααμ 2,15; ἀσσελγια 2,8.18). Three times a ς is added to the end of a word (επειθυμειας 2,10; συνεστωσης

⁸ See IV. Appendix A. These and other scribal errors have been catalogued by M. TESTUZ (ed.), *Papyrus Bodmer VII – IX* (Geneva 1959) 29–34; S. KUBO, *P 72 and the Codex Vaticanus* (SD 27; Salt Lake City, UT 1965) 8–30; ROYSE, *Scribal Habits*, 545–614.

3,5; πλανης 3,17). A final *v* is omitted from ηδονη in 2,13; a final *ς* is omitted from αληθου in 2,22; and a final *ς* is substituted for *v* in τρυφης in 2,13.

There are a number of instances where a syllable is repeated by mistake:

1. και before καιπερ (1,12)
2. ει before ειδοτας (1,12)
3. του repeated (1,14)
4. σα repeated in εβασσασανιζειν (2,8)
5. και repeated (2,12)

In 3,3 a syllable may have been omitted by mistake, i.e., εν omitted before ενπεγμονη.

Finally, a number of other errors have been corrected in the manuscript⁹. There is a dot to mark the error above the κ of κγνωσιν in 1,5 and the κ of διεκγειριν in 1,13; in the former case, the κ has also been erased but is still visible. Likewise, there are dots to mark the errors over the θ of αποφθευγοντας in 2,18 and the second κ of κοσμος in 3,6. In a number of cases, a letter has been erased and another letter written in its place. Thus, in 1,7 there is an erasure under a λ in φιλαδελφια; under the α of τοιασδε in 1,17; under the ως of επειλυσεως in 1,20; in 2,5 a letter has been erased between αλλ and ογδοον; there is an erasure under the ης of εντολης in 3,2; and one after the γ of στηριγμου in 3,17. In a number of cases a missing letter or word has been written above or at the end of the line. Thus in 1,8 του seems to have been added at the end of the line after τη; the υ missing from ουκ has been added above it in 2,4; what looks like εις has been added above something scratched out before το διγμα in 2,6; the η missing from τηρειν has been added above it in 2,9; what looks like the second ε missing from ελευσονται has been added above it in 3,3; the λο missing from βουλομενος and the τι missing from τινας have been added above them in 3,9; υμας has been added after υπαρχειν in 3,11; and ω has been added above a scratched out letter in αμωμητοι in

⁹ ROYSE, *Scribal Habits*, 559, counts 22 corrections by the original hand in 2 Peter, but I cannot find the correction he mentions in 2,4b. Perhaps this is the correction he mentions elsewhere in 2,5. ROYSE, *Scribal Habits*, 569, identifies two corrections by a second hand, namely in 1,8 and 3,16.

3,14. There are also some other kinds of corrections. In 2,16 ξ appears to have been written over some other letter in ἐλεγεῖν. Likewise, in 2,19 δ has been written over a ζ in δούλοι. In 2,17 the ο of ὑπο has been crossed out. Finally, in 3,16 ταις has been written after the last line, completing the word αὐταις left incomplete at the end of the last line.

Another thing contributing to the impression that the scribe was not highly literate in Greek is the presence of a marginal note in Coptic. This is found in 2,22 where the Greek word ἀληθου has the Coptic gloss ΠΜΕΙ.

All of this shows that the scribe of P⁷² was not adept. James Royse quotes Carlo Martini as saying:

“the true and proper *errors* of the scribe are rather numerous and demonstrate a rather mediocre diligence and a quite uncertain knowledge of the Greek language”¹⁰.

Readers of P⁷² might not only have concluded that its scribe was not expert, but also have seen 2 Peter itself as a document manifesting a low level of literacy.

The Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex was found, along with other manuscripts, in a jar near Dishna in Egypt, not far from a Pachomian monastery¹¹. The manuscripts may also have been written in that area.

2. *The Meaning of 2 Peter in Papyrus 72*

I will discuss five ways in which the distinctive features of 2 Peter in P⁷² have the effect of giving the letter a meaning significantly different from that of the probable original text.

a) Jesus as divine

The most important distinctive feature of 2 Peter in P⁷² is its presentation of Jesus as divine to a greater degree than is done by the probable original text of 2 Peter. This occurs most clearly in 1,2; the version of this verse in P⁷² does not include καὶ. The verse speaks

¹⁰ ROYSE, *Scribal Habits*, 580, quoting MARTINI, *Beati Petri Apostoli Epistulae*, xviii.

¹¹ WASSERMAN, “Papyrus 72 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex”, 32.

of του θυ ιηυ του κυριου ημων (God, Jesus our Lord), rather than του θεου και ιησου του κυριου ημων (God and Jesus our Lord) as in the likely original text. While the latter apparently distinguishes Jesus from God, the text in P⁷² identifies Jesus as God.

This peculiarity of P⁷² has often been noted. Because it coheres with peculiarities of two other documents copied by the same scribe, namely Jude and 1 Peter, it may be an intentional change, or at least seems to be one that reflects the views of the scribe. In Jude 5 P⁷² speaks of θεος χριστος as having saved Israel from Egypt, while the probable original text speaks of κυριος. And in 1 Pet 5,1 P⁷² speaks of the sufferings of θεου, while the likely original text speaks of the sufferings of Χριστου¹². All three of these peculiarities have the effect of presenting Jesus as God¹³.

What is not always noted is that this omission of και from 2 Peter 1,2 in P⁷² extends a presentation of Jesus as divine that is already prominent in the likely original text of 2 Peter. This is clearest in 1,1 which speaks of του θεου ημων και σωτηρος ιησου Χριστου (our God and savior Jesus Christ), probably identifying Jesus Christ as God. However, there are many other elements of 2 Peter that support this same identification¹⁴.

The likely original text of 2 Peter 1,2 probably distinguishes Jesus from God. This moderates the identification of Jesus as God in 1,1, indicating that the identification of Jesus as God is not a simple, straightforward matter¹⁵. The version of 1,2 found in P⁷² eliminates this moderation of the identification of Jesus as God and so makes it a more simple, straightforward matter.

¹² On this passage see F.W. BEARE, "The Text of 1 Peter in Papyrus 72", *JBL* 80 (1961) 253-260, 255; MARTINI, *Beati Petri Apostoli Epistulae*, xxiv.

¹³ See M. A. KING, "Notes on the Bodmer Manuscript of Jude and 1 and 2 Peter", *BSac* 121 (1964) 54-57; EHRMAN, *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 85-86; T. NIKLAS – T. WASSERMAN, "Theologische Linien im *Codex Bodmer Miscellani*?", *New Testament Manuscripts. Their Texts and Their World* (eds. T.J. KRAUS – T. NIKLAS) (Texts and Editions for New Testament Study 2; Leiden – Boston, MA 2006) 161-188, especially 184-185; ROYSE, *Scribal Habits*, 609-14. Ehrman suggests that the P⁷² version of 2 Peter 1,2 is anti-Adoptionistic.

¹⁴ On this see T. CALLAN, "The Christology of the Second Letter of Peter", *Bib* 82 (2001) 253-263.

¹⁵ However, if the και in the likely original text is understood as epexegetical, this text too can be seen as restating the identification of Jesus with God — "God, even Jesus our Lord". It is not ordinarily understood this way, probably because simple identification of Jesus as God is not common in the New Testament.

Another peculiarity of 2 Peter in P⁷² that may express the identification of Jesus as God is the use of δι' ου (through whom) at the beginning of 1,12 rather than δι' ου (therefore) as in the likely original text. In the latter, 1,12 states the conclusion from the preceding argument – because of its importance, the author will always remind the addressees about what he has just said. The text in P⁷² says instead that the author will remind the addressees through “our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.” The phrase “through Jesus Christ” and its equivalents are rather common in the letters of Paul. For example, in Rom 1,8; 7,25 Paul gives thanks to God through Jesus Christ (cf. also Rom 16,27). A closer parallel is provided by Paul’s statement in Rom 15,30 that he exhorts the addressees through our Lord Jesus Christ. In itself this language does not necessarily imply the divinity of Christ; in the letters of Paul it is one aspect of Paul’s central idea that to be a Christian is to exist in union with Christ. However, apart from such a context, as in 2 Peter, the idea that the author of 2 Peter acts through Christ can easily be seen as expressing an understanding of Christ as divine.

b) Salvation from desire

Other peculiarities of 2 Peter in P⁷² suggest that humans need to be saved from desire, while the likely original text sees them as needing salvation from corruption. In 1,4 P⁷² speaks of having escaped την εν τω κοσμω επιθυμιαν φθοραν (the desire in the world that is corruption) rather than της εν τω κοσμω εν επιθυμια φθορας (the corruption in the world by desire) as in the likely original text. The text in P⁷² says that one needs salvation from desire, which is corruption, while the likely original text says that one needs salvation from corruption, which results from desire. In the probable original text of 2 Peter, corruption is understood both literally as meaning physical destruction/disintegration and metaphorically as meaning spiritual destruction/disintegration. Metaphorical corruption leads to literal corruption¹⁶. By speaking of desire as corruption in 2 Peter 1,4 the text of P⁷² conceives corruption in purely metaphorical terms and as consisting of desire. Perhaps that same understanding of corruption should be seen throughout 2 Peter in P⁷².

¹⁶ On this see T. CALLAN, “The Soteriology of the Second Letter of Peter”, *Bib* 82 (2001) 549-559.

In 2,10 P⁷² speaks of ἐπειθυμείας σαρκος (desire for flesh [presuming that the final *ς* of ἐπειθυμείας is a spelling error]) while the likely original text has ἐπιθυμία μιάσμου (desire for defilement). Since this verse also speaks of going after the flesh, the different expressions in P⁷² and the probable original text have the same general meaning. However, the text of P⁷² puts more emphasis on desire specifically for the flesh. Desire for the flesh is also more satisfactory than desire for defilement as a description of the mental state of the unjust.

Finally, P⁷² omits μέστους (full) from 2,14. Without this adjective the verse speaks of “having the eyes of an adulteress” rather than “having eyes full of an adulteress” as does the likely original text. The former presents the false teachers as using their eyes in the same way as an adulteress, i.e., to seek out adultery; the latter presents them as using their eyes only to gaze on an adulteress, intending to engage in adultery with her. These two expressions are very close in meaning, but the former emphasizes slightly more than the latter that desire is the thing from which one needs salvation.

c) Testamentary Letter of Peter

Two other peculiarities of 2 Peter in P⁷² improve its presentation as a testamentary letter from Peter. In 1,15 P⁷² has σπουδαζω (I am eager) rather than σπουδασω (I will be eager) as in the likely original text¹⁷. P⁷² describes Peter’s present state of mind as he writes the letter, where the likely original text speaks of Peter’s future state of mind. The text of P⁷² better suits 2 Peter’s presentation of Peter as composing 2 Peter as a testamentary letter.

Somewhat similarly, in 3,16 the text of P⁷² has στρεβλωσουσιν (they will twist) while the probable original text has στρεβλουσιν (they twist). In this way P⁷² presents misinterpretation of the letters of Paul as something that will happen in the future, instead of speaking of it as something happening now as the likely original text does. This brings the passage into greater conformity with 2 Peter’s general presentation of the false teachers as arriving in the future.

¹⁷ Sinaiticus has the same thing as P⁷² at this point. The reading has the same significance in both, but in Sinaiticus this does not seem to be part of a general theme of its version of 2 Peter even to the rather limited extent that it does in P⁷².

d) Prophecy and Scripture

In 1,20 P⁷² speaks of προφητια και γραφη (prophecy and scripture) rather than προφητεια γραφης (prophecy of scripture) as in the probable original text. While the latter identifies prophecy as part of scripture, the former speaks of prophecy as something that exists alongside scripture. Perhaps 2 Peter in P⁷² envisions prophecy as a living institution among Christians, somewhat as in the letters of Paul (see e.g., 1 Corinthians 14). Prophecy and scripture are alike in not being of one's own explanation, but it is prophecy, not scripture, to which 2 Peter appeals here. The author may imply that early Christian prophets predict the second coming of Jesus and that this is a foundation for the validity of this expectation, which is more secure than the transfiguration mentioned in 1,16-18. In the likely original text of 2 Peter, in which prophecy is part of scripture, the argument in 2,4-10a can be understood as a specification of how the prophetic word in scripture predicts the second coming of Jesus. In P⁷² 2,4-10a may be understood as a separate, scriptural argument alongside the argument from prophecy. The prophets mentioned in 3,2 could be these early Christian prophets.

e) Simplified Eschatology

A final important aspect of 2 Peter in P⁷² is its simplification of the eschatology found in the likely original text of 2 Peter. In 3,8 P⁷² says that μια ημερα παρα κυ ως χιλια ετη ως ημερα μια (one day with the Lord is like a thousand years like one day) rather than μια ημερα παρα κυριω ως χιλια ετη και χιλια ετη ως ημερα μια (one day with the Lord is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day) as in the probable original text¹⁸. At this point the author

¹⁸ Codex Sinaiticus again says something very similar to P⁷² at this point, namely μια ημερα παρα κυ ως χιλια ετη ως ημερα μια (one day from the Lord is like a thousand years like one day). This differs from P⁷² only in having the genitive rather than the dative case after παρα. This does not seem to be part of a general theme of Sinaiticus' version of 2 Peter even to the limited extent that it does in P⁷². Both P⁷² and Codex Sinaiticus' versions might have arisen by parablepsis as the scribe's eye jumped from the first χιλια ετη to the second. This, however, would only have been apparent to someone who compared either of them with a text that included the probable original version. The ordinary reader of either P⁷² or Codex Sinaiticus would presumably have understood its meaning as I explicate it here.

of 2 Peter is apparently responding to the idea that the parousia of Jesus has been delayed by arguing that time is different for God than for humans. The text of P⁷² simply says that one day for God is like a thousand years for humans that is like one day for God. Because what seems like a long time to humans is a very short time to God, what seems like a delay to humans is not a delay for God.

This is also the main point of the likely original text of the verse. However, it not only says that one day with God is like a thousand years, but also that a thousand years (with God) is like one day. The text of P⁷² might suggest that using the formula one day = one thousand years it is possible to calculate divine time. The likely original text suggests rather that divine and human time are completely incommensurable. One cannot maintain that the parousia of Jesus has been delayed not merely because a long time for humans is a short time for God, but because divine and human time are completely different and no conclusion about the former can be based on the latter.

Another aspect of 2 Peter's eschatology is presented distinctively by P⁷² in 3,10. Here the text of P⁷² says that γη και τα εν αυτη εργα ευρεθησεται λυομενα (the earth and the works on it will be discovered dissolved) while the likely original text does not include the last word — λυομενα (dissolved). The meaning of the likely original text is unclear; I suggest that the author is thinking that eschatological fire will destroy all injustice and only the just will remain, having thus been revealed. By adding the word λυομενα, the text of P⁷² clarifies this statement as meaning that the earth and the works on it will be dissolved along with the elements that, it has just been said, will be dissolved.

II. Codex Sinaiticus

Codex Sinaiticus, like Codex Vaticanus to be discussed below, is a parchment codex. Its pages are 15"×13.5" with four columns on each page and 47 lines per column. Presumably this large book was intended for public reading in the church. Also like Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus is a biblical codex. It is assumed that it contained the entire Old Testament even though the first part of the Old Testament, namely Genesis to 1 Chronicles is now missing. The codex contains the entire New Testament along with two writings not now considered part of the New Testament, namely the

Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas. Readers of this copy of 2 Peter would have been informed by the codex that they were reading part of the Bible.

The scribe who wrote 2 Peter in Codex Sinaiticus was much more adept than the scribe of P⁷². Nevertheless, Codex Sinaiticus has more scribal errors than Codex Vaticanus. I count 55 itacisms and other errors based on replacing a letter or letters with similar sounding letters in 2 Peter ¹⁹.

1. *The Work of the Scribe*

There is one case of misspelling where part of a word is omitted, namely ηραν instead of ημεραν in 2,9. A ν is mistakenly added to τη in 1,7. In 2,18 the letters θη have been mistakenly added to the word ματαιοτης; there are dots over these letters, presumably to mark the error.

In 2,12 γεγεννημενα may be a misspelling of γεγεννημενα, replacing a double ν with a single ν. In 2,14 μοιχαλις may be a misspelling of μοιχαλιδος, perhaps based on misunderstanding the word as it was read. Although μοιχαλις is found at this same point in two other manuscripts, namely A and 33, it does not seem to be part of the vocabulary of the Greek language.

Twice a word is repeated by mistake: ουδ is repeated after ακαρπους in 1,8 and ελευθεριαν is repeated in 2,19. In both cases there are dots over the repeated word.

A number of other errors have been corrected in the manuscript:

1. The most extensive such correction is found in 1,12-13. The words και περ ιδοτας και εστηριγμενους εν τη παρουση αληθια. δικαιον δε ηγουμεναι, εφ οσον ειμι εν τουτω τω σκηνωματι, διεγριν υμας were omitted from the original text and have been added at the bottom of the page with an arrow to indicate where they should be inserted.
2. A similar but less extensive correction is found in 3,12 where the words και σπευδοντας were omitted and have been added in the margin with a tilde to indicate where they should be inserted.
3. In a rather large number of cases a missing letter or word has been written above the line. Thus the επι missing from χορηγησατε has

¹⁹ See IV. Appendix B.

been added above it in 1,5; in 2,5 there are lines through the last two letters of an original *κοσμον*, and *ω* has been written above them; in 2,9 *ο* and *υ* have been written above the last two letters of an original *πιρασμων*; in 2,12-13 an original *και φθαρησονται αδικουμενοι* has been corrected to *καταφθαρησονται αδικουμενοι* by adding a stroke to the top of the *ι* in *και* to convert it into a *τ*, writing an *α* above the line after it, and writing *ομι* above the line after the *κ* in *αδικουμενοι* (dots have been put above *αδι* to mark them as an error); in 2,16 an original *βεωσορσορ* has been corrected to *βεωσορος* by putting a line through the first *ρ* and writing *ος* above the line after the second *ρ* (dots have been put above *εω* to mark them as an error); in 2,16 *εν* has been written above the line before *ανθρωπου*; in 2,18 an original *του οντως* has been corrected to *τους ολιγως* by writing a *σ* above the line after *του*, erasing *ν* and writing *λ* over it, adding *ι* at the end of the line, and converting *τ* into *γ* by erasing part of the letter; in 2,19 an abbreviation for *και* has been written above the line before *δεδουλωται*; in 3,5 an original *συνεστωτα* has been corrected to *συνεστωσα* by putting a line through the second *τ* and writing a *σ* above it; in 3,11 an original *ημας* has been corrected to *υμας* by putting a line through the *η* and writing *υ* above it; in 3,15 an original *αγεισθαι* has been corrected to *ηγεισθαι* by putting a line through the *α* and writing *η* above it; and in the same verse an original *δοθειαν* has been corrected to *δοθεισαν* by writing a *σ* above the line.

4. In other cases, in addition to the ones already mentioned, dots have been written above words or letters, presumably to mark them as errors. In 1,3 there are dots over the phrase *τον θν και* which immediately follows the preposition *προς*; in 2,1 there are dots over the phrase *εν τω λαω*; in 2,9 there are dots over the word *πεφυλακισμενους* which immediately follows *αδικους δε*.
5. In still other cases, in addition to the ones already mentioned, a letter has been erased and another letter written over it. In 1,18 an original *ουν* seems to have been converted to *συν* in this way; in 2,2 *η οδος* has been converted to *η δοξα* by putting a line through the first *ο*, erasing the *ς* and writing *ξ* over it, and adding an *α* at the end of the line; in 2,3 what looks like an original *εκπορευσονται* was converted into *ενπορευσονται* by erasing the *κ* and writing *ν* over it; in 2,4 what looks like an original *η* was converted into *ει* by writing it over the *η*; in that same verse an original *ζοφοις* has been converted into *ζοφου* by putting a line through the final *σ* and changing the *ι* into *υ*; in 3,4 a letter has been erased and replaced by a *κ* with an extra stroke serving as an abbreviation for *και*.

6. In 2,10 ἐπιθυμίας has been corrected to ἐπιθυμία by putting a line through the ς; in 2,21 the letters σι and a line indicating a final ν have been added at the end of a line after ἐπιγνους to complete the word. Likewise in 2,22 δε has been added at the end of a line after συμβεβηκεν.

The scribe of 2 Peter in Sinaiticus is the one identified by Constantin Tischendorf as scribe A, an identification confirmed by subsequent investigations²⁰. Two other scribes also contributed to Sinaiticus (though not 2 Peter), namely Tischendorf's scribes B and D. A is less adept than D, but more adept than B. Milne and Skeat say that scribe D is "the most correct, who alone reaches the standard of good literary papyri", and that "Scribe A is markedly inferior to D"²¹. Dirk Jongkind says, "The work of scribe A and scribe B is not of a very high quality". And he affirms the words of Westcott and Hort about the Sinaiticus New Testament as accurately describing the work of scribe A, namely that it shows "all the ordinary lapses due to rapid and careless transcription" and a "bold and rough manner of transcription"²². In some contrast to the scribal abilities of A and B, according to Jongkind, "the bookhand of all three scribes is well formed, regular, and fairly standardized among the three"²³.

The corrections described in 1 and 2 above derive from the corrector called C by Tischendorf and subsequent investigators. This derivation is shown in both cases by the way the place of the correction in the text is indicated. The use of two arrows pointing in the same direction, one at the point of insertion, the other next to the text to be inserted, is characteristic of C corrections written in upper or lower margins. Likewise the use of two wavy lines, one at the point of insertion, the other next to the text to be inserted, is characteristic of C corrections written in the side margins²⁴. The C

²⁰ See H.J.M. MILNE – T.C. SKEAT (with contributions by D. COCKERELL), *Scribes and Correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus* (London 1938) 18-29; D. JONGKIND, *Scribal Habits of Codex Sinaiticus* (Piscataway, NJ 2007) 9-18, 26-27.

²¹ The first quotation is from *Scribes and Correctors*, 53; the second from page 54.

²² The first quotation is from *Scribal Habits*, 253; Jongkind quotes WESTCOTT – HORT on page 255. He quotes from B.F. WESTCOTT – F.J. A. HORT, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. Introduction, Appendix (London²1896) 246-247.

²³ JONGKIND, *Scribal Habits*, 59.

²⁴ MILNE – SKEAT, *Scribes and Correctors*, 46.

corrections are usually thought to have been made a considerable time after the writing of the original manuscript. According to Milne and Skeat, some assign them to the fifth, others to the seventh century ²⁵. At least some of the other corrections described above were probably made before Sinaiticus left the scriptorium.

2. *The Meaning of 2 Peter in Codex Sinaiticus*

I will discuss two ways in which the distinctive features of 2 Peter in Sinaiticus have the effect of giving the letter a meaning significantly different from that of the probable original text.

a) Jesus as distinct from God

The most important feature of the content of 2 Peter in Codex Sinaiticus is that it does not present Jesus as divine to the same degree as is done by the probable original text of 2 Peter. In 1,1 the text of Sinaiticus says that the addressees have received faith *εις δικαιοσυνην του κυ ημων και σωτηρος ιυ χυ* (for the justice of our lord and savior Jesus Christ) rather than *εν δικαιοσυνη του θεου ημων και σωτηρος ιησου χριστου* (by the justice of our God and savior Jesus Christ) as in the likely original text. Sinaiticus does not identify Jesus as God, while the probable original text does identify Jesus as God ²⁶. In addition, the statement that the addressees received faith “for the justice” of Jesus is less suggestive of an understanding of Jesus as divine than is saying that they received faith “by” his justice. The latter implies that Jesus is the one who bestows faith; the former suggests that faith allows one to have the justice that characterizes Jesus.

Another peculiarity of Sinaiticus that suggests it does not identify Jesus with God is the phrase *τον θν και* (God and) after *προς* in 1,3. Verse 3 begins with a reference to “his divine power”; other things being equal, the antecedent of “his” is likely to be Jesus, the person named immediately beforehand. Verse 3 goes on to say that “his divine power” has given author and addressees all things. In

²⁵ MILNE – SKEAT, *Scribes and Correctors*, 65.

²⁶ EHRMAN, *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 266-267, comments on the alteration of *θεος* into *κυριος* in Sinaiticus (and some other manuscripts) and implies that this is an anti-Patristic change.

the likely original text of 2 Peter these are all things for life and piety, but in Sinaiticus they are all things for God and life and piety. The presence of “God” in this list suggests that even if Jesus has divine power, he is not God. His divine power has given all things for God, who is someone other than Jesus.

In light of Sinaiticus’ text in 1,1 and 3, it is also possible that in Sinaiticus “God” rather than “Jesus” is understood as the antecedent of “his” in the phrase “his divine power.” This would further reduce any suggestion that Jesus is divine according to Sinaiticus’ 2 Peter.

Another peculiarity of Sinaiticus that is congenial to its presentation of Jesus as someone distinct from God is its version of 1,14. In this verse Sinaiticus says simply that Jesus Christ revealed the imminence of Peter’s death to Peter, while the likely original text says that ο κυριος ημων (our Lord) Jesus Christ revealed it. Insofar as the title “Lord” implies the divinity of Jesus²⁷, not using the title here avoids the presentation of Jesus as divine²⁸.

A final peculiarity of 2 Peter in Sinaiticus that is congenial to its presentation of Jesus as someone distinct from God is its version of the words of the heavenly voice to Jesus in 1,17. According to Sinaiticus the voice said ουτος εστιν ο υς μου ο αγαπητος εις ον εγω ευδοκησα (this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased), while according to the likely original text the voice said ο υιος μου ο αγαπητος μου ουτος εστιν εις ον εγω ευδοκησα (my son, my beloved, is this one, in whom I am well pleased). The latter version suggests that the voice is indicating the identity of the son of God, while Sinaiticus’ version suggests that the voice is disclosing the identity of Jesus. By making “my son” the predicate rather than the subject of the sentence, Sinaiticus makes the status of Jesus as son of God slightly less emphatic than in the probable original text.

In agreement with Sinaiticus’ distinction between Jesus and God, three other peculiarities of 2 Peter in Sinaiticus emphasize the transcendence of God. 1) In 1,21 Sinaiticus describes prophecy by saying ελαλησαν αγιοι θυ ανθρωποι (holy human beings of God spoke), while the probable original text says ελαλησαν απο θεου ανθρωποι (human beings spoke from God). The text in Sinaiticus stresses the holiness of prophets and that they belong to God, but

²⁷ CALLAN, “Christology of the Second Letter of Peter”, 254-255.

²⁸ Sinaiticus has the title “Lord” in 1,1 where it is not found in the likely original text, but there, as we have seen, it replaces “God.”

does not say that their speech originated in God as the likely original text does. 2) In 2,11 Sinaiticus has *παρὰ κω* (before the Lord) while the probable original text has *παρὰ κυρίου* (from the Lord). The latter says that angels do not bring a slanderous judgment from the Lord, but Sinaiticus denies that angels bring a slanderous judgment before the Lord. This avoids any suggestion that God might be the source of a slanderous judgment. 3) In 2,13 Sinaiticus has *κομιουμενοι* (receiving) while the likely original text has *αδικουμενοι* (being wronged). Sinaiticus avoids all suggestion that the fate of the false teachers is unjust in any way.

b) A clear and explicit text

A number of other features of 2 Peter in Codex Sinaiticus make the meaning of the likely original text clearer and/or more explicit. Thus in 1,4 Sinaiticus speaks of having escaped *την εν τω κοσμω επιθυμιαν φθορας* (the desire for corruption in the world) rather than *της εν τω κοσμω εν επιθυμια φθορας* (the corruption in the world by desire) as in the likely original text. The latter is a more complex and ambiguous expression than the former. The former makes it clear that desire for corruption is what needs to be escaped. This is in harmony with 2,10 which speaks of desire for defilement.

In 1,5 Sinaiticus has *και αυτο δε τουτο* (and indeed this very thing) while the probable original text has *και αυτο τουτο δε* (and for this very reason = therefore). In Sinaiticus *αυτο ... τουτο* is probably to be understood as the object of *παρεισενεγκαντες* (having brought in beside) and in apposition to *σπουδην* (eagerness); in the probable original text *αυτο τουτο* is an adverbial accusative introducing vv. 5-7 as the apodosis of the sentence in vv. 3-7²⁹. In Sinaiticus vv. 5-7 can also be understood as the apodosis of the sentence, but one that has no introductory phrase. The expression in Sinaiticus is probably easier to understand than that in the likely original text. The latter seems to be unique in Greek literature, but the former is found in a few other places.

In 1,10 Sinaiticus has *ινα δια των καλων εργαων* (in order that through good works) after *σπουδασατε* (be eager), something not found in the probable original text. This makes explicit that the ad-

²⁹ On this see T. CALLAN, "The Syntax of 2 Peter 1:1-7", *CBQ* 67 (2005) 632-640.

dressees are to make their call and election secure through good works. Since $\iota\nu\alpha$ should be followed by the subjunctive, but Sinaiticus has the same verb as the likely original text, i.e., $\piοιεισθαι$, a present middle infinitive, the sentence in Sinaiticus is ungrammatical. Perhaps the scribe and readers of Sinaiticus understand $\piοιεισθαι$ as = $\piοιησθε$, the second person plural present middle subjunctive. Obviously this would involve substitution of $\epsilon\iota$ for η , something not otherwise found in Sinaiticus' 2 Peter, and substitution of $\alpha\iota$ for ϵ , also found in 1,19.

In 1,17 the words of the heavenly voice in Sinaiticus (discussed above) are closer to the words of the heavenly voice in Matthew 17,5 ($\text{ΟΥΤΟΣ ΕΣΤΙΝ Ο ΥΙΟΣ ΜΟΥ Ο ΑΓΑΠΗΤΟΣ ΕΝ Ω ΕΥΔΟΚΗΣΑ}$) than is the version of these words found in the likely original text of 2 Peter. This makes it easier to see the similarity of these words to the words in Matthew 17,5 than is the case in the probable original text.

Several features of 2,4-9 in Sinaiticus make the punishment suffered by sinners more explicit. In v. 4 Sinaiticus has $\sigma\iota\rho\iota\varsigma \zeta\omicron\phi\omicron\upsilon$ (pits of gloom) while the probable original text has $\sigma\epsilon\iota\rho\alpha\iota\varsigma \zeta\omicron\phi\omicron\upsilon$ (chains of gloom). While the latter presents darkness as something with which the sinful angels can be chained, the former names the place to which they were delivered, i.e., dark pits. As Richard Bauckham argues, the text of Sinaiticus may presume knowledge of "the tradition of the fall of the Watchers as it was told in *1 Enoch*"³⁰. According to this tradition the fallen angels were confined in valleys (*1 Enoch* 10:12) or the abyss (*1 Enoch* 18:11; 21:7; 88:1, 3).

In the same verse Sinaiticus has $\kappa\omicron\lambda\alpha\zeta\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma \tau\eta\rho\iota\nu$ (to keep confined) where the probable original text has $\tau\eta\rho\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ (kept). The phrase used by Sinaiticus is also found in v. 9; the scribe may have been influenced by v. 9 in writing the phrase in v. 4. Use of the infinitive instead of the participle makes it clearer that the purpose of delivering the angels to pits of gloom was to keep them. The addition of $\kappa\omicron\lambda\alpha\zeta\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ might simply develop the idea that the sinful angels are being kept, as indicated by the translation "keep confined." On the other hand, the participle might mean that the angels are being punished as they are being kept, either until judgment or as a judgment.

And in 2,9 Sinaiticus has $\pi\epsilon\phi\upsilon\lambda\alpha\kappa\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ (imprisoned) after $\delta\epsilon$ (and), which is not found in the probable original text.

³⁰ R.J. BAUCKHAM, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50; Waco, TX 1983) 249.

If *κολαζομενους* later in the verse means “confined”, Sinaiticus’ *πεφυλακισμενους* emphasizes this idea, which is also implicit in *τηριν* (to keep), by adding a synonym. On the other hand, Sinaiticus may understand *κολαζομενους* as meaning “punished;” in this case *πεφυλακισμενους* makes it explicit that the unjust are imprisoned while they are punished.

The punishment suffered by sinners is also more explicit in Sinaiticus’ version of 2,12. In this verse Sinaiticus has *καταφθαρησονται* (will be utterly corrupted) while the probable original text has *και φθαρησονται* (will also be corrupted). Sinaiticus emphasizes that the corruption of the false teachers will be complete.

In 2,21 Sinaiticus has *εις τα οπισω ανακαμψαι απο* (to return to the things left behind from) after *επιγνουσι* (having fully known it) while the probable original text has *υποστρεψαι εκ* (to turn away from). The two are very close in meaning, but Sinaiticus makes it explicit that departing from the holy commandment means returning to a former condition.

In 3,9 Sinaiticus says that the Lord is patient *δι’* (on account of) rather than *εις* (toward) the addressees, as in the probable original text. According to Sinaiticus, the Lord’s patience is not simply directed toward them, but is also occasioned by them. It is their need for time to repent that elicits the Lord’s patience. This is implicit in the likely original text, but Sinaiticus makes it explicit.

Finally, in 3,11 Sinaiticus has *ουν* (therefore) after *τουτων* (these) instead of *ουτως* (thus). This makes more explicit the meaning of the genitive absolute with which the verse begins.

III. Codex Vaticanus

Like Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus is a parchment codex. Its pages are 10.6”×10.6” (smaller than those of Sinaiticus) and have three columns per page³¹. In the New Testament each column has 42 lines. Also like Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus is a biblical codex. Although the first 46 chapters of Genesis are now missing, as are Psalms 105-135, the codex contained the entire Old Testament except for the Books of Maccabees. The last part of the New

³¹ The poetical books of the Old Testament are arranged in two columns per page.

Testament is now missing; so the codex does not contain Hebrews 9,15-end, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Revelation. However, it may originally have included these writings. Readers of this copy of 2 Peter would have known from the codex that they were reading part of the Bible.

1. *The Work of the Scribe*

The scribe who wrote 2 Peter in Codex Vaticanus was the best of the scribes who wrote the early copies of 2 Peter we are examining. The text of 2 Peter in Codex Vaticanus has remarkably few scribal errors. Most common are itacisms in which ει has been written instead of ι; this occurs 11 times (in 1,1.4.17.20 [twice]; 2,6; 3,1.3.8 [twice].17).

There is one case of misspelling where part of a word is omitted, namely εσχα instead of εσχατα in 2,20. In 2,14 ακαταπαστους has been mistakenly written instead of ακαταπαυστους. In 2,18 ματαιιοτητης has been mistakenly written instead of ματαιιοτης. In 3,5 συνεστωσης has been mistakenly written instead of συνεστωσα.

A few errors have been corrected in the manuscript:

1. In 1,16 an ε has been written above the line before the ι in μεγαλιοτητος, making it μεγαλειοτητος. Likewise, in 2,1 an ε has been written above the line before αυτοις, making it εαυτοις.
2. In 2,7 a τ has been written above the θ in λωθ, making it λωτ. In the same verse a ρ has been written above the line over ερυσατο, making it ερρυσατο.
3. In 2,8 and 16 a γ has been written above the first ν in ενκτοικων and ελενξιν respectively, making them εγκτοικων and ελεγξιν.
4. When the letters of the text were traced over at a later point in its history, the ε in all of the itacisms mentioned above was not darkened. To this extent they were all corrected.

The scribe of 2 Peter in Vaticanus is the one called B who wrote the entire New Testament. He also wrote part of the Old Testament; the rest was written by the scribe called A. Tischendorf suggested that scribe B of Vaticanus was the same as scribe D of Sinaiticus.

By contrast Milne and Skeat argue that the writing style of Vaticanus' scribe A is more similar to that of Sinaiticus' scribe D. Although the similarity is not great enough to be sure the same scribe wrote both, it is great enough to be sure they come from the same scribal tradition³². T.C. Skeat argues that it is reasonable to assume that both texts come from the same scriptorium, or at least the same place, i.e., Caesarea, about the same time³³.

2. *The Meaning of 2 Peter in Codex Vaticanus*

There are so few distinctive features of 2 Peter in Vaticanus that reading it differs very little from reading the probable original text. Vaticanus has a couple of the distinctive readings that are also found in Codex Sinaiticus, but in Vaticanus they do not fit into a general theme the way they do in Sinaiticus. Thus, in 2,4 Vaticanus (like Sinaiticus) has *σειροῖς ζοφου* (pits of gloom) while the probable original text has *σειραῖς ζοφου* (chains of gloom). The latter presents darkness as something with which the sinful angels can be chained; the former names the place to which they were delivered, i.e., dark pits. In this way Vaticanus is more specific than the probable original text about the punishment suffered by the angels. And in 2,11 Vaticanus (like Sinaiticus) has *παρα κω* (before the Lord) while the probable original text has *παρα κυριου* (from the Lord). The latter says that angels do not bring a slanderous judgment from the Lord, but Vaticanus denies that angels bring a slanderous judgment before the Lord. This avoids any suggestion that God might be the source of a slanderous judgment, and so emphasizes the transcendence of God.

Vaticanus also has a couple of notable readings that are not found in Sinaiticus. However, once again they do not indicate a general theme of this copy of 2 Peter. In Vaticanus (as in P⁷²) the

³² MILNE – SKEAT, *Scribes and Correctors*, 89-90.

³³ T.C. SKEAT, "The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus and Constantine", *The Collected Biblical Writings of T. C. Skeat* (ed. J.K. ELLIOTT) (Leiden 2004) 193-237, especially pp. 209-215. Others argue that Codex Vaticanus derives from Alexandria or even from Rome; arguments for both are found in P. ANDRIST (ed.), *Le manuscrit B de la Bible (Vaticanus Graecus 1209)* (Lausanne 2009). ELLIOTT, *Collected Biblical Writings of T. C. Skeat*, 281-294, discusses all three possibilities and argues that Skeat is correct in "T. C. Skeat on the Dating and Origin of Codex Vaticanus".

first words of the letter identify its author as Σίμων Πέτρος (Simon Peter) rather than Συμεών Πέτρος (Simeon Peter) as in the most likely original text. This has the effect of making the author more recognizable as the Σίμων Πέτρος mentioned in other New Testament writings, since this is the form of his name everywhere else but Acts 15,14. And in 2,13 Vaticanus has ἀγαπαῖς (love feasts) while the likely original text has ἀπατάς (deceits). Perhaps under the influence of the parallel passage in Jude 12, Vaticanus locates the misbehavior of the false teachers specifically at formal celebrations of the Christian church; the likely original text is less specific about the meals at which the misbehavior occurs. Jude 12 is the earliest passage to use ἀγάπη (love) with this meaning, but this later became common usage. Another early instance is probably to be seen in Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 8.2³⁴.

*
* *

The most important differences among the three earliest copies of 2 Peter concern the way they present Jesus. Readers of 2 Peter in Codex Vaticanus found Jesus presented the same way as in the probable original text, i. e., as God yet distinct from God. Readers of 2 Peter in P⁷² found less emphasis on the distinction between Jesus and God and thus more emphasis on the divinity of Jesus than in the probable original text of 2 Peter (and in the Codex Vaticanus copy). Readers of 2 Peter in Codex Sinaiticus found a less explicit presentation of Jesus as God and thus more emphasis on the distinction between Jesus and God than in the probable original text of 2 Peter (and in the Codex Vaticanus copy). In conjunction with this, readers of 2 Peter in Sinaiticus also found a greater emphasis on the transcendence of God than is found in the likely original text.

Readers of 2 Peter in P⁷² also found it different in other ways than the probable original text. It presents the view that humans need salvation from desire rather than from corruption; it is somewhat more consistently presented as a testamentary letter; it views prophecy as something alongside scripture rather than part of it; and it has a somewhat less complex eschatology than does the prob-

³⁴ On this see BAUCKHAM, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 84-85.

able original text. Readers of Codex Sinaiticus found a text in which some of the probable original text's difficulties had been moderated and whose meaning was more explicit than that of the likely original text. Readers of 2 Peter in Vaticanus read a text very close to that of the probable original text.

Readers of 2 Peter in P⁷² did not read it as part of the Bible and did not read a text written by an expert professional scribe. Readers of 2 Peter in Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus did read it as part of the Bible and read a professionally copied text. But the work of the scribe of Vaticanus was much better than that of Sinaiticus.

Appendix A

Itacisms and other errors based on replacing a letter or letters with similar sounding letters in P⁷².

Itacisms of various kinds.

1. ει for ι — 45 times [in 1,1.2 (twice).3.4 (four times).5 (twice).6.8.9.10.12.13.14.16.20 (three times); 2,1.6.7.10 (three times).13 (twice).17.18.19.20.21.22 (three times); 3,1.3 (twice).4.7.11.14.15]
2. ι for ει — 29 times [in 1,3 (twice).6 (twice).7.11.12 (twice).13.14.16.20.21; 2,1.2 (twice).3.4.5.6.7.15.21; 3,1.10.11 (twice).12.15]
3. ε for αι — 26 times [in 1,1.4.10 (twice).11.13.19 (twice); 2,1 (twice).5 (twice).7.8 (twice).17 (three times).18.19 (twice).21; 3,3 (twice).13.16]
4. αι for ε — 2 times [in 3,14.17]
5. η for ει — 3 times [in 1,2.6; 3,18]
6. α for ε — 2 times [in 2,15; 3,14]
7. υ for οι — 8 times [in 2,8.14.22; 3,1.10 (twice).12.16]

Other errors based on replacing a letter or letters with a similar sounding letter or letters include:

1. ο for ω (1,3) and ω for ο (1,19; 3,8 — or is this a change from accusative to dative case?)
2. ο for ου (1,5)
3. υκ instead of γκ (1,6 [twice]; 2,8)
4. τ instead of π (1,9.21)
5. inserting ν before τ (1,15)

6. δ instead of θ and ζ instead of δ (2,10)
7. η instead of α (2,10; 3,5)
8. ou instead of ω (2,13)
9. ν instead of μ before π (2,20; 3,3)

Appendix B

Itacisms and other errors based on replacing a letter or letters with similar sounding letters in Codex Sinaiticus.

Itacisms of various kinds:

1. ι for $\epsilon\iota$ — 43 times [in 1,2 (twice).3 (twice).5.6 (three times).7.11.12 (three times).13 (twice).17.18.19.20; 2,1 (three times).2 (twice).4 (twice).5.6 (twice).7.9 (twice).10.11 (twice).18.21 (twice); 3,1.4.9.12.18]
2. $\epsilon\iota$ for ι — 3 times [in 1,14; 2,11.16]
3. ϵ for $\alpha\iota$ — 5 times [in 1,10; 2,17; 3,3 (twice).13]
4. $\alpha\iota$ for ϵ — 1 time [in 1,19]
5. ν for oi — 1 time [in 3,10]

Other errors based on replacing a letter or letters with a similar sounding letter or letters include:

1. ν instead of μ before π (2,3)
2. $\nu\kappa$ instead of $\gamma\kappa$ (2,8)

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SUMMARY

An examination of the three earliest extant copies of 2 Peter (namely those found in Papyrus 72, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus) is made in order to determine how the meaning of 2 Peter is affected by differences among the three copies, especially the textual variations among them. These textual variations produce significantly different understandings of Jesus in the three copies of 2 Peter, as well as other less prominent differences in meaning.

RECENSIONES

Vetus Testamentum

Martien A. HALVORSON-TAYLOR, *Enduring Exile. The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible* (VTS 41). Leiden – Boston, Brill 2011. ix-230 p. 16 × 24,5

Interest in exile as a paradigm is remarkably growing and the book under review is a valuable contribution to the subject matter (diss. Harvard University, Jon D. Levenson director). As the introduction explains (ch. 1), the concept involves not only geographical displacement but also living in a foreign country under brutal domination, variegated marginalization and impotent disillusionment about the situation in the homeland because its restoration fails to occur. These living conditions are indissolubly connected to the question: “Where is our God?”. The author intends to sketch the spectrum of connotations which the concept “exile” has acquired during a process of “metaphorization” to which specific writings of the biblical canon from the 6th to the 3d century BCE bear witness. Her research rests on current theories of metaphors as models of thought produced by the interaction of tenor and vehicle (I.A. Richards, M. Black, J. Soskice, P. Ricoeur). The development in view emerged from the discussion about the duration of the exile (Lev 26,34-35; Jer 29,10; [25,11-12]; Ezek 4,6; 2 Chr 36,22-23; Ezra 1,1-3; 9,8-9) and finally turned into the concept of “an enduring exile”. It may have received impetus from the Ancient Near Eastern treaty literature, specifically from the curses therein, as appears from a comparison of Deut 28 and Lev 26 with these texts. These chapters were edited in the aftermath of the deportation to Babylon, but exhibit an early concept of exile that is associated with lasting famine, disease and death as expressions of divine wrath.

Ch. 2 deals with Jeremiah’s “Book of Consolation” (Jer 30–31), a text with liberal supply of exile related concepts. The author makes the assumption that “any effort to chart the development of language about exile will require judgments about the history of the Book” (45). A survey enumerates two main currents: (1) The chapters form a pre-exilic composition which was gradually reworked (W. Holladay, N. Lohfink, J. Lundbom); (2) They are fully a postexilic, multilayered composition (R. Carroll). In the author’s view, their literary-historical stratification dates from before to after the fall of Jerusalem. She describes their final outline as follows: a prose introduction (30,1-4) is followed by six poems (30,5-11; 30,12-

17; 30,18–31,1; 31,2–6; 31,7–14; 31,15–22) and two prose conclusions (31,23–34; 31,35–40). She focuses her research on the first (30,5–11), second (30,12–17), fourth (31,2–6) and sixth (31,15–22) poems, and in addition on the introduction (30,1–4). The choice of these fragments may seem arbitrary but is based on the presumption that they contain earlier material (30,5–7.12–15; 31,2–6.15–17.18–20). Another preliminary decision of the research regards the different text traditions of these chapters in MT and LXX. On the basis of the 4Q Hebrew fragments of the book of Jeremiah, the thesis is held that the shorter Hebrew *Vorlage* of LXX reflects an earlier edition of the book. Consequently, the development of the exile metaphor in chs. 30–31 is studied under the angle of comparing the Masoretic text with the Old Greek translation.

With due respect for these basic assumptions, it has to be thought that they substantially determine the outcome of the research. The choice of specific poems may hamper a view on the topic at stake from the redactional unity of the composition as advocated by others — G. Fischer, *Das Trostbüchlein. Text, Komposition und Theologie von Jer 30–31* (SBB 26; Stuttgart 1993); id., *Jeremiah 26–52* (HThKAT; Freiburg 2005) (this author is lacking in the bibliography); B. Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom. Essays on the Interpretation of Jeremiah 30–31* (OTS 51; Leiden 2004). E.g., by leaving the poems of 30,18–31,1 and 31,7–14 out of consideration, two major subtopics of the metaphor exile, i.e. the restoration of the city in connection with the rise of a ruler and the return to the land, are missing in the total overview. The question arises whether these items would not have influenced the development of the metaphor exile at an early stage.

Moreover, the earlier dating of the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX is a hypothesis, however serious it may be, and therefore, the comparability of the LXX with the MT in terms of *prius et posterius* remains questionable. A synchronic research of the two recensions next to each other might reflect the full content of the metaphor exile in presumably two different Jewish communities (land and diaspora). It should be fairly noted, however, that the author herself is aware of the fact that her basic choice in this matter “is not without potential pitfalls” (96). Anyhow, the conclusion runs that the two recensions do not reveal different concepts of exile, only some different nuances of meaning (in MT, the audience is explicitly broadened to those outside the land, and there is emphasis on the anticipation of Yhwh’s deliverance). Against this background, the following images of exile are convincingly elaborated: Jacob’s distress (30,5–11); wounded Zion (30,12–17); favor in the wilderness (31,2–6); Rachel weeps, Ephraim repents (31,15–22). Moreover, the audience and its conception of exile are described on the basis of the introduction (30,1–4).

Ch. 3 discusses the exile metaphorization in the book of Isaiah. The choice of passages is based on the classical, tripartite division of the book in as far as not a single passage of First Isaiah is the object of research, and Second and

Third Isaiah are considered as literary-historical unities with distinct systems of exile associations. There is, of course, no general agreement about the multilayered redaction of the book as a whole, yet in the absence of this, several passages from chs. 1–39 could have been analyzed while prescinding from their redaction-historical background. For in these chapters, the whole range of exile related topics is found. Some of them reflect the pre-exilic fear of deportation in Judah (5,13-17; 39,6-7), others the aftermath of the deportation of the Northern kingdom (8,23–9,6), others, again, the hope for an end of the world-wide diaspora (11,11-16; 27,12-13) and the return of the deportees to their own land (14,1-2) and Jerusalem (33; 35). Even if these texts cannot be situated in one paradigm, as is presumed for Second and Third Isaiah, they would individually bear witness to the variegated metaphorization of the exile.

The omission is the more unfortunate since the author's discussion of Second and Third Isaiah has yielded precious insights. Since chs. 40–55 center on the end of the calamities caused by the exile, the different associations of the metaphor are integrated by the idea of the need of Yhwh's intervention. On the basis of this re-conceptualisation, chs. 56–66 transform exile into a vehicle for the tenor of the deplorable social and political situation in the land. In this way, the two book parts exhibit a different experience of time. While Second Isaiah experiences the end of the exile as the reversal of the deportation from the homeland to a foreign country, Third Isaiah revalorizes that catastrophe into a sort of unremitting captivity, i.e. the socio-economic ills which have arisen in the community and require a new intervention of Yhwh. The author elaborates these metaphorizations under the following headings: exile and redemption (48,20-21; 40,1-2); exile and death (42,18-25; 51,12-16); exile and the mission of the Servant (42,5-9; 49,7-13; 61,1-3; 58,6-7).

The concrete exegesis of these passages is enlightening, as it gives depth to the main thesis of the monograph. Sometimes overstretching of associations seems to be prominent (e.g. with regard to terminology of [debt] slavery in 48,20 and 40,2, and with death as the inevitable consequence of captivity in 51,14), but the very nature of metaphors allows for fluctuating borders between related topics under the dominating paradigm. The study conclusively demonstrates that in Second Isaiah, Yhwh's being Israel's *go'el* is inseparably integrated into exile as metaphor. With regard to the third domain, exile and the Servant, the metaphorization in Third Isaiah inevitably begins in the first two "Servant songs" of Second Isaiah (42,5-9; 49,7-13). This puts the starting point of different metaphor systems into perspective; it also raises the question why the last two "Servant songs" do not contribute to the broadening of the exile metaphor. Nevertheless, this methodological flexibility does not weaken the important conclusion that the last part of the book of Isaiah enlarges the exile language for an audience that suffers, inside or outside the land, from a diversity of calamities and prays for deliverance.

Ch. 4 is devoted to the later application of the exile metaphor in Zech 1–8. In keeping with their admitted composition (introduction: 1,1-6; night visions: 1,7–6,15; conclusion: 7,1–8,23), the author ascertains diachronic shifts concerning the metaphor (also within the visions and oracles). They are rooted in the understanding of exile as an expression of Yhwh's wrath against Israel and their continual estrangement. The date of the prophet's visions (519 BCE according to 1,7) implies that the overthrow of Babylon's rule by Cyrus (538 BCE) was not considered to be the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer MT 29,10-11 and 25,8-9.11-12 with their counterparts in Jer LXX are discussed). This comes to the fore in the angel interpreter's lament and God's answer: there is no talk of a breach of promise by Yhwh regarding time, only of impatience and comfort (Zech 1,12-17). Moreover, the introduction to the book, 1,1-6, a later attempt to reframe Zechariah's visions and oracles, defends Yhwh's attitude and calls only for Israel's return to him. Enlightening is the reference to a 7th century Assyrian inscription which shows that a period of seventy years for divine wrath was a Near Eastern convention that might explain its variability in the Scriptures. A lengthy, accurate analysis (in diachronical perspective) of the first (1,7-17) and second vision (2,1-4) with the subsequent exhortation (2,10-17) and of the closing question with the concluding sermon (chs. 7–8) elucidates "the precarious balance" of the message in Zech 1–8. It holds that the end of Yhwh's wrath is at the same time imminent and will be deferred. Here, the principal tenor of the metaphor exile contains the enduring estrangement of Yhwh and his people, while the return to the land and the restoration of Jerusalem are subservient topics (197-198).

The monograph is beautifully written. It contains an in-depth contribution to the present-day research into exile and diaspora, and as such it provides a rich chapter for a theology of the Old Testament. Previous remarks in this review about the choice of the texts analyzed have no other purpose than to invite the author to invest her expertise in this field in other biblical books as well (e.g. Ezekiel, Psalms).

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Jacob STROMBERG, *Isaiah after Exile*. The Author of Third Isaiah as Reader and Redactor of the Book (Oxford Theological Monographs). Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. xvi-281 p. 16 × 24

Cet ouvrage important est une version révisée de la thèse doctorale que l'auteur a présentée à l'Université d'Oxford, sous la direction de Hugh G. M. Williamson, spécialiste bien connu du livre d'Isaïe et de son histoire littéraire. Dans une introduction brève (1-10), Stromberg rappelle

le chemin parcouru par l'exégèse du livre d'Isaïe depuis le fameux commentaire de Bernhard Duhm (1892), puis il expose son propre projet. Le temps n'est plus où les chap. 1–39 (Proto-Isaïe ou PI), 40–55 (Deutéro-Isaïe ou DI) et 56–66 (Trito-Isaïe ou TI) étaient considérés comme des ensembles indépendants les uns des autres. Quelle que soit sa préhistoire, le livre d'Isaïe se présente comme un seul ouvrage, dont les différentes parties sont reliées. Comme le TI apparaît comme un élément plutôt tardif, il est permis de formuler une hypothèse de travail: l'auteur "principal" du TI a lu et interprété à la lumière d'une problématique nouvelle ce qu'il a trouvé dans le PI et le DI; ce travail a été de pair avec l'introduction de matériaux nouveaux dans les chap. 1 à 55. Cette hypothèse sera vérifiée et déployée en trois temps, dans un ordre logique.

Dans la première partie de l'ouvrage (9-68), Stromberg cherche à identifier "l'auteur du TI" et à isoler les sections qu'il a écrites lui-même. Alors que les chap. 60–62 (texte unifié, dépendant du DI) forment à la fois le cœur et l'élément le plus ancien du recueil, le cadre constitué par les sections 56,1-8 et 65–66 peut être considéré comme ses éléments les plus récents, œuvre de "l'auteur du TI". La longue section qui s'étend de 56,9 à 59,20 pourrait provenir du même auteur, mais cette hypothèse reste incertaine; d'autre part, l'auteur du cadre connaît la lamentation d'Is 63,7–64,11, plus ancienne, qui s'inspire elle-même de 63,1-6. C'est donc le cadre extérieur (56,1-8 et 65–66), composition d'un seul auteur, qui servira de point d'appui pour le développement ultérieur de la thèse.

La deuxième partie du livre (69-141) est consacrée à l'auteur du TI comme lecteur du PI et du DI, plus anciens. Ainsi, Is 56,1 combine deux manières caractéristiques de parler de la justice (צִדִּיקָה): le PI – et lui seul – l'associe fréquemment au mot מִשְׁפָּט ("droit, décision de justice", dans le sens d'une action à mener; le DI – et lui seul – l'associe à שְׁלוֹמָה ("salut") pour signifier le don de Yhwh à ses fidèles. Is 56,1 articule les deux expressions et donc les deux perspectives théologiques, et en même temps l'auteur les interprète en fonction de sa propre expérience du retard du salut. Stromberg donne d'autres exemples de lecture interprétative: 56,1-8 est écrit en fonction du chap. 55; le serviteur unique du DI est le modèle des serviteurs de Yhwh dont parle le TI; le TI interprète le motif deutéro-isaïen des choses anciennes et des choses nouvelles pour parler de la création de cieux nouveaux et d'une terre nouvelle (65,17); etc. Pour chaque parallèle, Stromberg observe les éléments communs (en soulignant surtout ceux qui ne figurent que dans ces deux textes), mais aussi les déplacements de sens opérés par le TI. Il relève notamment que celui-ci restreint chaque fois le salut aux "justes", le refusant aux "méchants"; la césure ne passe plus, comme dans les textes plus anciens, entre Israël/Juda et les nations, mais entre ceux qui obéissent à la Loi divine et ceux qui la refusent.

Ayant établi un profil des pratiques de l'auteur du TI comme lecteur des chap. 1–55, Stromberg peut consacrer la troisième partie de son ouvrage

(143-251, incluant de brèves conclusions portant en fait sur l'ensemble de la démarche) aux apports "trito-isaïens" aux deux premières parties du livre. En effet, il est raisonnable de penser que l'écriture d'une longue partie finale a été l'occasion d'autres additions à l'ouvrage. Pour détecter de telles additions, Stromberg recherche les passages réputés post-exiliques qui présentent des analogies significatives avec 56,1-8 et 65-66, tant sur le plan formel (usage de la même phraséologie, même procédé de lecture de textes plus anciens) que sur celui du contenu. Sans que cette liste soit exhaustive, il reconnaît de tels passages "trito-isaïens" en 1,27-31; 4,2-6; 6,13bβ; 11,10; 36-39 (transfert depuis le livre des Rois et adaptation); 48,1.19b.22; 54,17b. C'est l'ensemble du livre d'Isaïe qui est ainsi reprofilé.

Dans ses conclusions finales (248-251), Stromberg synthétise sa démarche en une demi page, puis il écarte l'hypothèse selon laquelle les textes de Is 1-55 dont il a été question dans la troisième partie pourraient être l'œuvre d'un imitateur du TI, mais il n'exclut pas l'existence de passages plus tardifs, comme en 24-27. Quoi qu'il en soit de ce dernier point, le travail rédactionnel de l'auteur du TI a donné au livre d'Isaïe sa structure fondamentale définitive. L'ouvrage se termine par une bibliographie (252-266), un index des références bibliques (267-277) et un index des auteurs modernes (278-281).

L'enquête menée par Stromberg est ambitieuse, car elle concerne un domaine immense (l'ensemble du livre d'Isaïe!), dont la complexité est redoutable, et la recherche à son sujet est pléthorique. Comment, sans décourager le lecteur, se frayer un chemin à travers la jungle des hypothèses et parvenir à des propositions crédibles? L'auteur me paraît avoir réussi ce tour de force, et l'ouvrage se distingue par de belles qualités, dont les moindres ne sont pas la clarté et la concision. La démarche est logique et méthodique; quant à l'argumentation, elle me paraît être un modèle de limpidité. Prenons un seul exemple (101-109): il y a correspondance évidente entre Is 11,6-9 et 65,25, mais la nature de la relation entre les deux passages est discutée. Stromberg examine chacun des arguments déjà proposés: l'emploi de *מאחד* en 65,25, alors que 11,7 a *יחדו*; l'ambiguïté de ce dernier mot, clarifiée en 65,25; l'addition de *אמר יהוה* en 65,25; le traitement différent du serpent; les mots différents utilisés pour parler de l'agneau. Tous les indices convergent vers une même conclusion: 65,25 reprend et interprète le chap. 11. Ensuite, l'auteur examine le cas particulier de 11,9a et répond à toutes les objections. Si elle confirme ce que d'autres auteurs affirment depuis longtemps (aucun argument n'est nouveau!), l'enquête me paraît logique et assez complète, sans longueurs inutiles. Bref, c'est un modèle du genre. À mon sens, c'est ce genre d'analyse qui fait la force du livre.

La double hypothèse globale du TI comme *Fortschreibung* du PI et du DI et du remaniement de l'ensemble du recueil par le même auteur n'est pas vraiment neuve, elle non plus, mais le travail de Stromberg permet de la confirmer et de la préciser.

L'ouvrage comporte cependant un point faible: sa tendance à simplifier – au-delà du raisonnable? – la question des rédactions du TI. Peu de spécialistes, je crois, admettront que les chap. 60–62, d'une part, et 65–66, d'autre part, puissent former des blocs homogènes. Ainsi, 65,1-7 considère le peuple entier comme coupable, puis les vv. 8-15 oppose les serviteurs de Yhwh et les coupables; d'autre part on observe plusieurs changements de destinataires dans le discours. Il est vrai que les chap. 60–62 forment le centre du TI, où tout est construit selon une disposition symétrique et que ces mêmes chapitres comportent certainement un fond assez ancien (première moitié de l'époque perse?). Cependant on imagine mal ce petit ensemble comme un élément indépendant d'une œuvre plus large, et même le chap. 60 est sans doute moins unifié qu'on ne l'a dit. Bref, attribuer 56,1-8 et 65–66 à "l'auteur du TI" sans avoir procédé à une analyse rédactionnelle approfondie de l'ensemble du TI me semble imprudent. Dans l'ordre logique de l'enquête, c'est la base de l'ensemble qui s'en trouve fragilisée.

Il me reste à dire une déception. Dès son introduction (6), Stromberg prévient son lecteur: quoiqu'il se situe dans la ligne historico-critique, il s'en tient à une analyse littéraire, sans relier le travail de lecture et d'écriture qu'il découvre à une situation socio-historique précise. Je l'accorde: notre connaissance des époques perse et hellénistique reste insuffisante. Il n'empêche: Stromberg ne cherche pas à savoir pourquoi un auteur "post-exilique" (sans préciser davantage ...) a entrepris de reprofiler tout le livre d'Isaïe et d'écrire en particulier sa dernière partie. Ce travail considérable devait avoir un objectif, politique ou autre, et c'est cet objectif qui devait inciter l'auteur à écrire de telle manière et non de telle autre. Sur ce point, je suis resté sur ma faim.

Quoi qu'il en soit de ces réserves, le livre de Stromberg sera utile pour la clarté de ses analyses précises, et toute recherche ultérieure devra en tenir compte.

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Koert VAN BEKKUM, *From Conquest to Coexistence. Ideology and Antiquarian Intent in the Historiography of Israel's Settlement in Canaan* (Culture and History of the Ancient Middle East 45). Leiden–Boston, Brill, 2011. xxi-691 p. 16 × 24. € 191 – \$ 270.00

The scope of this book, originally a dissertation submitted at Kampen Theological University, is so unusual that one might well call it aberrant: it is a historical study of Josh 9,1–13,7 — a sequence of episodes rarely, if ever before, treated as a unity — a treatment that requires a thorough neglect of all questions of literary structure. The author claims from the beginning that

Joshua — indeed, all of Genesis to Kings — is “historiography” with factual “truth claims” and actual “truth values”, written in the 10th or 9th centuries at the court of Jerusalem with access of documenting from the Late Bronze age with the ideological purpose of presenting the “Davidic empire” as fulfillment of Joshua’s conquest. In the 13th century, “several tens of thousands of people” came from Transjordan (585), concluded a treaty with the Gibeonites, and fought a Canaanite coalition headed by Jerusalem in the south and another one in the north which resulted in the destruction of Hazor. The “people out of Transjordan” are identified with Merneptah’s Israel.

In the epilogue (593-597), the author “reveals” his evangelical background but claims his “scholarship” to be independent of this. But in fact, that “revelation” comes to nobody’s surprise. The whole book is to a great extent an exercise in evangelical rhetoric, starting with its problematic perception of “truth” (see *supra*) and ending with polemics against the “empiricist ideology”. The author states his discomfort with present biblical exegesis and academic history (7-92) and then bases his arguments on outdated (Albright, Alt, Noth) or evangelical (Millard, Kitchen, Long) authors. The claim that all “historiography” is ideological (31-40) is self-serving in making all the cats as grey as one’s own. Epistemologically, history as a social and/or cultural science is “objective” in so far as it does not present “truths” about the past, but probabilistic theories of the past which can be tested (and refuted) by empirical evidence. There are no “facts” without theories which make the “facts” function as such, and not each and every “narrative representation of the past” meets the standards of today’s academic historians.

As for the misconception of Genesis through Kings as “history”, it is clearly Hellenistic in origin, proven by Josephus, *c. Apionem* 1.37-43 in the late 1st century AD and by the Chronicle’s reception of Genesis-Kings in the 3rd century BC. In pre-Hellenistic terms, as preserved in the Jewish canon, Genesis through Deuteronomy is “Torah”, i.e. “universal instruction”, and Joshua through Kings are prophetic books, i.e. authoritative interpretation (and application) of Torah.

As for the author’s theory of 13th century history, “several tens of thousands of people” are the dimension of the population of all Israel/Palestine west of the Jordan. The population of Transjordan was less, and I know of no possible ecological and social environment in 13th century Transjordan from where “several tens of thousands of people” could have come. Regardless of whether a scholar or scientist believes in miracles or not, she or he is not entitled to postulate miracles to make his or her theory work. There is indeed some attestation for a deity who came in from the desert in Iron I Israel/Palestine, viz. O. Keel’s “Lord of the Ostriches”, but its frequency is rather low, which implies that its social base was rather small (O. Keel – Ch. Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole. Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund*

bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen [QD 134; Freiburg 2001] is another standard work of reference ignored by the author, probably because it falsifies the author's belief in a monotheistic and aniconic Israelite religion from the beginning). It is impossible that Merneptah's Israel came out of Egypt; cf. E.A. Knauf, "From Archeology to History, Bronze and Iron Ages. With Special Regard to the Year 1200 B.C.E., and the Tenth Century", in L.L. Grabbe ed., *Israel in Transition. From Late Bronze II to Iron IIA* (c. 1250-850 B.C.E.). Volume 1. The Archaeology (LHB/OTS 491 = ESHM 7; New York, London 2008) 72-85 (one of the many contributions to the present debate ignored by the author). It is also impossible that Hazor was destroyed prior to Merneptah's mentioning of Israel, since the city is still mentioned in a letter from Ugarit from the beginning of the 12th century; cf. D. Arnaud, "Hazor à la fin de l'âge du bronze", *Aula Orientalis* 16 (1998) 27-35. This is confirmed by the destruction's date according to the "Low Chronology", which, by the end of 2010, had won the "chronology debate". The author's relying on the dating by the present excavators (462-465) is unfounded (or a bias towards the more "biblical" date). The task of the excavators is to dig and to document what they have dug away. The interpretation of the evidence presented (when it is presented in full) is the task of the historian. It is perfectly acceptable that few excavators withstand the temptation to turn into historians, but some do it more competently (like Israel Finkelstein), others less competently (as Ammon Ben-Tor in the case of Hazor). The pig taboo clearly did not function as an early Israelite "identity marker" (585-586), for the frequency of pig bones in Israel is as low as in Edom. Did Israel and Edom share an ethnic identity at a time when there is no evidence for an all-Israelite and all-Edomite identity at all? Following the approach of Marvin Harris' "cultural materialism", what later became an element of religious practice would have served a practical purpose at the time of its origin, like the "holy cow" in India. This purpose is easy to find: early Israelite society, and Edomite society through the ages, was a society permanently at the edge of starvation. Now pigs eat exactly the same foodstuffs that men eat, but they return less calories in meat than they consume during their raising. In a society at the edge of starvation, pig-husbandry is a luxury nobody can afford. On the other hand, in an affluent society with food going to waste, pig raising is a reasonable strategy of waste management. This is why the Philistines feasted on pork (up to 20% pig bones in their garbage disposals as opposed to 0.1% in Edom and early Israel), and not because they followed a commandment by Dagon like "Thou shalt eat pork". For everybody acquainted with the written evidence from the Near East in the 10th and 9th century, a dating of Joshua to this period is as unlikely as to the Late Bronze age. It does not help that Mesha uses the term *herem*, too, for Mesha's "sacrifice of wholesome destruction" in specific cases is quite different from the ap-

plication of the term to whole populations, a semantic development which, as was observed long ago by N. Lohfink and others, presupposes the historical experience of the Assyrian mode of warfare (cf. Isa 37,11). In addition, the author feels no need to engage with T. Römer, *The So-called Deuteronomistic History: a Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London 2005).

The promise of the title “from conquest to co-existence” is fulfilled in so far as this, according to the author, was a historical process in the time from Joshua to David. Those readers, for whom that term rather denotes a thought process among the scribes who wrote Joshua, might direct their attention to Th.R. Elßner, *Josua und seine Kriege in jüdischer und christlicher Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Theologie und Frieden 37; Stuttgart 2008) and E. Ballhorn, *Israel am Jordan: Narrative Topographie im Buch Josua* (BBB 162; Bonn 2011). At the end of the day, we leave it to the readers to judge the merits and limits of this dissertation.

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Novum Testamentum

Hildegard SCHERER, *Gestreiche Argumente. Das Pneuma-Konzept des Paulus im Kontext seiner Briefe* (NTAbh 55). Münster, Aschendorff Verlag, 2011. xii-293 p. 16 × 24. €50

Il libro rappresenta la revisione di una dissertazione dottorale discussa nella Facoltà di teologia cattolica dell'Università di Münster, sotto la direzione del prof. Martin Ebner. L'autrice, assistente della cattedra di esegesi del Nuovo Testamento nella suddetta Università, intende studiare il concetto di *pneuma* nelle lettere paoline, tenendo conto del loro specifico contesto comunicativo.

Dopo la premessa e l'indice generale (i-xii), la prima parte (1-27) è dedicata alla formulazione delle domande di partenza del lavoro e alla metodologia di studio in esso utilizzata. Scherer solleva così tre questioni: la prima riguardante lo specifico concetto di *pneuma* utilizzato nelle lettere di Paolo, la seconda in merito alla rilevanza sociale e teologica del discorso sul *pneuma*, la terza sulla particolarità comunicativa di tale concetto. L'autrice si situa all'interno della nuova ricerca paolina, apertasi grazie alla *New Perspective*, e, seguendo il suo *Doktorvater*, vuole analizzare i testi dell'Apostolo, letti nel loro contesto storico, segnato dall'impero romano, per comprendere come in una determinata situazione si giunga ad una determinata teologia, a sua volta valevole per un determinato gruppo. La tesi del lavoro si trova nell'affermazione che Paolo, in base al contesto proprio di ogni lettera, richiama sfumature diverse del concetto di *pneuma*, al fine di sostenere la sua argomentazione (17). Inoltre, poiché tale concetto sarebbe strettamente legato alla sfera conoscitiva dei destinatari, come a quella dell'autore, esso costituirebbe un elemento fondamentale di un processo di costruzione e formazione del gruppo cristiano. In ragione di ciò, l'autrice ricorre alla sociologia cognitiva — attraverso un linguaggio tecnico di difficile comprensione per il lettore non aduso a tale disciplina — e delinea in tre passi il proprio metodo di lavoro: si studiano i testi sul *pneuma* a partire dal loro contesto letterario, per andare alla ricostruzione del mondo conoscitivo dell'autore e dei destinatari e giungere poi alla rilevanza di tale discorso pneumatologico per la formazione del gruppo cristiano.

La seconda parte comincia ad analizzare i testi pneumatologici paolini partendo da 1 Corinzi. Il primo capitolo (30-46), dedicato a 1 Cor 1-4 nel suo complesso, presenta soprattutto una ricostruzione della situazione conflittuale di Corinto, legandola a un supposto partito di Apollo che avrebbe postulato e praticato una differenza di *status* nella comunità in nome della sapienza. Ma tale idea appare essere frutto di un errato *mirror-reading* del testo da parte dell'autrice che, subito dopo, contraddittoriamente afferma:

“Direkte Notizen über Auftreten und Verkündigung des Apollos, in denen die Wurzel eines solchen Differenzierungsprozesses zu suchen wäre, fehlen” (43).

Il secondo capitolo (46-70) analizza il testo di 1 Cor 2,6-16, curando molto il contesto letterario a discapito del brano stesso, e conclude con il delineare il ruolo mediatore dello Spirito che opera nella trasmissione alla comunità del paradosso della croce, valore critico di tutta la sapienza umana e di ogni relativa differenziazione all'interno della chiesa.

Il terzo capitolo (70-81) si sofferma su 1 Cor 3,16-17, evidenziando come lo Spirito sia costitutivo della comunità dei credenti in quanto tempio di Dio, nel quale la santità è attribuita ugualmente a ciascuno dei suoi membri, e sia principio di separazione sociologica del gruppo cristiano rispetto all'esterno.

Il quarto capitolo (81-95) dà uno sguardo generale a 1 Cor 12-14, affermando erroneamente che l'*agape* è un carisma (cf. 12,31b) e uniformando, indebitamente, le ragioni del conflitto di 1-4 e di 12-14 a rivendicazioni di uno *status*.

Il quinto capitolo (95-100), che studia il testo 1 Cor 12,1-3, vorrebbe mostrare che il testo fa riferimento a processioni proprie di alcuni culti pagani, ma purtroppo tale dimostrazione non risulta convincente, non trovando agganci nella terminologia paolina.

Il sesto capitolo (100-108) prende in esame 1 Cor 12,4-11, concludendo sulla funzione unificante dello Spirito rispetto alla diversità dei carismi.

Il settimo capitolo (108-121) chiude la disanima sulla pneumatologia di 1 Cor con il versetto 12,13, nel quale la metafora del corpo è legata all'azione dello Spirito che unifica tutti i membri di tale organismo, in ragione del battesimo ricevuto, e che li costituisce come gruppo nel mondo.

La terza parte è dedicata al *pneuma* in Galati. Nel primo capitolo (123-137) Scherer presenta la struttura e il contenuto della lettera, dichiarando anche la sua preferenza per la lettura derivante dalla *New Perspective*, che considera l'espressione paolina «opere della Legge» in riferimento ai cosiddetti *identity markers*, cioè particolari prescrizioni legali quali la circoncisione e le leggi di purità costitutive dell'identità giudaica nel I secolo. Lasciando da parte tale discutibile posizione, in questo contesto risulta difficilmente comprensibile il fatto che l'autrice non prenda per niente in considerazione la tematica della giustificazione, almeno per Gal 3.

Il secondo capitolo (137-150), dedicato a Gal 3,1-14, sottolinea che, al posto della circoncisione, Paolo presenta il possesso dello Spirito come caratteristica dell'identità del gruppo cristiano.

Il terzo capitolo (150-171), riguardante Gal 5,16-25, sottolinea il legame tra lo Spirito e la nuova creazione, l'appartenenza alla quale informa l'etica della comunità cristiana, e insiste, senza una vera dimostrazione testuale, ma con un previo assunto teologico proprio della *New Perspective*, sul superamento del particolarismo derivante dall'alleanza sinaitica.

La quarta parte, che concentra la sua attenzione su 2 Corinzi, si apre

con un capitolo (175-180) sulla struttura e il contenuto di 2,14-7,4, considerata come un'apologia, attraverso la quale Paolo cerca di farsi accettare come apostolo dai suoi.

Nel secondo capitolo (180-187) l'autrice studia 2 Cor 3,2-3, sostenendo che l'Apostolo si presenta come lo strumento attraverso il quale lo Spirito opera nella comunità cristiana e la forma secondo uno specifico profilo.

Il terzo capitolo (187-199) si sofferma su 2 Cor 3,4-18, dove Paolo rileggendo l'alleanza mosaica ne annuncia il superamento attraverso la nuova alleanza di cui egli è mediatore, ma di cui lo Spirito è il realizzatore.

Il quarto capitolo (200-203) analizza 2 Cor 1,21-22; 5,5, versetti nei quali lo Spirito è garanzia dell'immissione del divino nella sfera umana.

La quinta parte è dedicata a Romani e si apre con un primo capitolo riguardante tutta la lettera (205-222). In tale ambito, Scherer sostiene la presenza di una terminologia giudiziale, del potere e della persecuzione nei cc. 1-8, con riferimenti specifici all'impero e a una supposta situazione di persecuzione dei credenti di Roma. Tutto ciò risulta ben lungi dall'essere dimostrato dal punto di vista testuale e conduce all'idea, tutt'altro che convincente, che Paolo, seguendo una prospettiva politica, contrapponga il potere divino a quello romano.

Il secondo capitolo (222-249), continuando questo tipo di lettura, approfondisce il testo di Rm 8,1-39. Secondo l'autrice, in esso Paolo contrapporrebbe Dio e Cristo al potere dell'impero attraverso i due principi dello Spirito e della carne; inoltre, di contro ad una figliolanza divina attribuita al solo imperatore, ora ogni credente gode di una figliolanza divina; infine se il *genius*, inteso come divina protezione, era esclusivo appannaggio imperiale, nel tempo nuovo lo Spirito è il difensore e l'intercessore di ciascun cristiano, il quale si troverà così, nel giudizio, dalla parte di Dio. Tuttavia, ancora una volta, questi riferimenti diretti non sembrano fondati sul dettato testuale.

La sesta e ultima parte è costituita dalla conclusione (251-260). Scherer, dopo aver ribadito la basilare convinzione cristiana della ricezione del dono dello Spirito da parte dei credenti, presenta quattro aspetti della pneumatologia paolina: lo Spirito come mediatore di rivelazione e di conoscenza, come forza vitale e formativa del Creatore, come garante dell'ordine etico, come cifra della presenza divina. La rilevanza del discorso sullo Spirito è al livello costitutivo del gruppo cristiano, con una connotazione egalitaria al suo interno e con una differenziazione al suo esterno. Unica vera novità apportata da Paolo rispetto allo sfondo biblico sarebbe, secondo l'autrice, che lo Spirito è attribuito anche ai non giudei, mettendo così da parte tutto il legame propriamente paolino con la cristologia. Infine l'elemento specifico dal punto di vista comunicativo sarebbe dato dal fatto che l'Apostolo parla dello Spirito facendo leva sullo sfondo culturale biblico e greco-romano dei suoi interlocutori per rassicurarli del loro *status* religioso, della benevolenza dell'Onnipotente e della loro speranza.

Il volume si chiude con le abbreviazioni, con la bibliografia (limitata sostanzialmente agli autori di lingue inglese e tedesca), con la lista delle citazioni bibliche e dei classici e con un breve elenco tematico. Tuttavia manca l'indice degli autori moderni.

In una considerazione generale dell'opera, oltre alle lacune già evidenziate, dobbiamo dapprima segnalare un errore di digitazione (17), errori nell'uso dell'accento ebraico e dello spirito greco (54), l'attribuzione a Lémonon di un commentario a 1 Corinzi al posto di quello ai Galati da lui pubblicato (137, n. 30).

Ma più necessario è rilevare che Scherer, la quale dichiara tutto il suo interesse per il processo comunicativo presente nelle lettere paoline, paradossalmente non si preoccupa di quello tra lei e i suoi lettori. Infatti usa il linguaggio della sociologia cognitiva senza dare alcuna spiegazione dei termini tecnici - peraltro non effettivamente utili, visto il loro scarso utilizzo nel lavoro - inoltre la sua frase è spesso uno *Schachtelsatz*, periodo complesso, che si annoda su se stesso talora fino a compromettere la correttezza sintattica (52, "sind" al posto di "ist"). Inoltre, nei capitoli riguardanti le diverse lettere, non c'è mai una conclusione dalla quale si possa dedurre l'idea di *pneuma* presente nella relativa epistola. Ogni volta l'autrice premette lo studio del contesto letterario o di quello storico all'analisi del testo specifico, ricorrendo a una precomprensione metodologica che inficia l'esegesi, cosicché ella trova nel brano ciò che ha già enucleato nell'approfondimento della sezione o della situazione. Poi la stessa analisi esegetica risulta molte volte superficiale e sbrigativa, volta a confermare gli assunti precedentemente evidenziati dalla Scherer. Infine, nel libro manca quasi del tutto il riferimento alla cristologia, alla quale, nei testi paolini, appare profondamente legata la concezione dello Spirito.

A nostro avviso, tutto questo contribuisce a stendere una grossa ombra sulla metodologia del presente lavoro (fatta derivare da Martin Ebner) sui suoi presupposti teologici, condivisi con la *New Perspective*, e sulla sua intrinseca validità.

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Jacques SCHLOSSER, *La première épître de Pierre* (Commentaire Biblique : Nouveau Testament 21). Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 2011. 332 p. 15.5 × 23. €38

La parution d'un commentaire majeur sur la Première de Pierre en langue française est bienvenue. Les commentaires les plus récents: P. Bony, *La Première épître de Pierre*. Chrétiens en diaspora (Lire la Bible; Paris 2004), et P. Prigent, *Suivre le Christ avec la première épître de Pierre* (Lyon

2006), n'ont ni la même ampleur ni la même ambition. Jacques Schlosser (désormais J.S.), spécialiste des évangiles et du Jésus de l'histoire, évoque dans son avant-propos le développement de son intérêt pour l'épître. Cet intérêt s'est traduit par plusieurs études sur 1 P, dont les principales sont rassemblées dans le volume *À la recherche de la parole*. Études d'exégèse et de théologie biblique (LD 207; Paris 2006): sont abordés divers thèmes et questions: "le thème exodial", la relation avec "la tradition évangélique" et avec "les Actes des apôtres", la place de "la résurrection de Jésus" et de "l'amour fraternel". On peut ajouter: "Déluge et typologie dans 1 P 3,19-21", in R. Kuntzmann (ed.), *Typologie biblique*. De quelques figures bibliques (LD h.s.; Paris 2002) 177-202 et "Les éléments hymniques en 1 Pierre 1,3-2,10", in D. Gerber – P. Keith (eds.), *Les hymnes du Nouveau Testament et leurs fonctions* (LD 225; Paris 2009) 179-208. Ce commentaire est l'occasion pour l'auteur de prendre en charge la totalité de l'œuvre et aussi de faire le point sur la recherche, comme le montre l'ample bibliographie générale et aussi, tout au long du texte, de multiples parenthèses indiquant les contributions d'auteurs sur les sujets évoqués.

Les questions classiques d'introduction sont traitées en une quinzaine de pages (29-45). Le genre de l'œuvre est celui d'une lettre circulaire et non celui d'une "homélie baptismale", thèse qui a eu un large succès. Cette lettre est adressée à des communautés dispersées dans les provinces d'Asie Mineure (provinces ou régions, 32-33), à majorité pagano-chrétiennes, sans qu'on puisse écarter la présence d'éléments juifs, surtout dans la partie occidentale de l'Anatolie. La question de la date de rédaction est examinée à partir de quatre données: les indications sur la situation sociale des destinataires, l'organisation des communautés, la mention cryptée de Rome sous le nom de "Babylone", et une probable dépendance par rapport à l'évangile de Matthieu: la lettre se situerait entre 70 et 90. Cette date exclut l'attribution à l'apôtre Pierre lui-même (par facilité, dans le commentaire l'auteur de l'épître porte le nom de "Pierre"). J.S. écarte l'hypothèse d'une école pétrinienne à Rome, mais admet l'existence d'une tradition pétrinienne; l'épître resterait dans la mouvance paulinienne. L'auteur inconnu de l'épître (pas Silvain, seulement porteur de la lettre) veut exhorter et instruire les communautés en se plaçant sous le patronage de Pierre, un patronage choisi non seulement en raison de l'aura de l'apôtre mais aussi de son statut de témoin d'une souffrance pour le Christ. L'origine romaine de l'œuvre est l'hypothèse la plus vraisemblable.

Pour saisir l'agencement de l'épître, le recours à la rhétorique ancienne est jugé peu opportun car, s'appliquant essentiellement aux discours, elle intègre mal la parénèse abondante de l'épître, qui doit être considérée comme une lettre: entre une préface et une conclusion, plusieurs thèmes se développent et on peut distinguer plusieurs parties. En 1,1-12 on a l'ouverture annonçant le thème, dans une atmosphère de célébration: le mystère du salut en Christ. Le "corps de la lettre" (1,13-5,11), présente une première

partie (1,13–2,10) qui adresse un appel solennel à la sainteté, suivi d'un texte essentiel sur l'Église, fondée sur le Christ (2,4–10). La deuxième partie (2,11–4,11) situe les chrétiens dans leur environnement social, l'exhortation visant d'abord divers groupes, avec un accent placé sur l'idée de soumission (2,11–3,12), puis souligne la place de la souffrance des croyants (3,13–4,11). Dans la troisième partie (4,12–5,11), faite de sections apparemment hétérogènes (4,12–19; 5,1–5; 5,6–9), on enregistre à la fois un approfondissement de la réflexion sur la souffrance et une série d'encouragements. Une doxologie (5,10–11) précède la conclusion (5,12–14), finale épistolaire qui présente l'avantage de fournir les principales informations concrètes que l'Introduction du commentaire a exploitées.

J.S. reprend un avis largement partagé: le premier souci de l'auteur de l'épître est d'exhorter et d'encourager des chrétiens éprouvés. Ces épreuves, les fidèles doivent les assumer et ils peuvent même y discerner une finalité positive (la purification). Convaincu de la miséricorde divine, le fidèle conserve une espérance vivante suscitant la joie dans la pensée d'un salut glorieux "prêt à être révélé au (bon) moment dernier" (1,5), mais qui éclaire aussi le présent. La christologie fait des souffrances du chrétien une grâce actuelle: il subit l'ostracisme social et la persécution comme une participation aux souffrances du Christ lui-même. L'antithèse entre souffrance et gloire, caractéristique du parcours du Christ, s'applique également à lui. Le paradoxe de cette double présence de la souffrance et de la joie dans la vie du chrétien "n'atteint nulle part la même densité qu'en 1 P" (44–45). La conclusion de la lettre (5,12) explicite l'intention: "exhorter et attester"; à côté des nombreuses sections parénétiques, le souci constant est d'exposer "la véritable grâce de Dieu".

Dans chaque péricope de l'épître se succèdent: traduction – accompagnée d'indications sur l'attestation manuscrite, éventuellement sur le choix de traduction – bibliographie spécifique, interprétation, notes, pas très nombreuses mais consistantes et techniques.

La traduction cherche à rester aussi proche que possible du texte grec. Quelques expressions conservent l'ambiguïté de l'original ("des enfants d'obéissance" (87); "par conscience de Dieu" (164), et on note un penchant pour des formulations concrètes: "ayant donc déposé tout vice" (113); "des convoitises charnelles qui font campagne contre l'âme" (143); "des maîtres tordus" (163); "qu'il débranche sa langue du mal!" (192); ne pas souffrir "en tant que fouineur dans les affaires des autres" (255); "jetant vers lui tout votre souci" (289); "Dieu lui-même vous réparera" (289). J.S. est consciencieux au point d'indiquer entre parenthèses les mots que le français lui demande d'ajouter aux termes grecs. Ainsi, pour Pierre 1,10–12, on a: "Au sujet de ce salut (les) prophètes"; "de quel (bon) moment"; "l'esprit de Christ (présent) en eux"; "en (s'occupant de) ces réalités".

Dans la première partie, un texte sur le "salut" a depuis longtemps retenu l'attention par sa densité et la hardiesse de ses affirmations: 1,10–12

(76-85). L'interprétation proposée compte quelques solutions originales sans être inconnues. Ainsi J.S. semble admettre que l'antithèse entre "les souffrances destinées au Christ et les gloires d'après" pourrait s'appliquer aussi au "sort des lecteurs". Tout en reconnaissant qu'on ne peut pas savoir si le désir des anges de se pencher sur les grâces du salut est exaucé ou non, il retient l'idée que ce désir est resté vain, ce qui valorise la grâce faite aux chrétiens de connaître les réalités eschatologiques. On perçoit ici, mais il y a d'autres exemples, la grande prudence de J.S. qui le pousse parfois à ne pas trancher explicitement, tout en privilégiant une solution. Est notée en 1,10-12, "la quasi-identité entre le salut et la grâce", parce que les deux termes appartiennent au registre eschatologique. La continuité entre l'ancienne prophétie et l'Évangile bénéficie d'une attestation exceptionnelle: "Pierre est pourtant le seul auteur du NT à attribuer au Christ ou à son Esprit une présence active dans les prophètes d'autrefois" (79). En outre, les prophètes jouissaient d'une claire conscience que leur message n'était pas pour eux-mêmes; l'AT devient alors le livre de la révélation de Dieu aux croyants de la nouvelle alliance.

La richesse de 2,4-12, où christologie et ecclésiologie se conjuguent, véritable couronnement de la première partie, est pleinement reconnue. J.S. accepte assez facilement des ambivalences de sens: *oikos* désignerait à la fois le Temple et une communauté humaine. Entre Israël et l'Église on ne perçoit "ni quelque rupture, ni la continuité théologique" (132). La question du "sacerdoce universel" (9) est résolument écartée: "la juxtaposition ou l'articulation du sacerdoce des baptisés et du sacerdoce ministériel ne peut pas être discutée sur la base de 1 Pierre" (142).

La difficulté de la section 3,18-22 est notoire. J.S. tente d'y découvrir une cohérence thématique autour de la passion du Christ et de sa glorification, avec la mention de leur répercussion sur la condition des croyants. Dans l'explication (208-232), certaines solutions sont clairement formulées. À propos du baptême, le sens d'"engagement", et non pas de "demande", pour *eperôtēma*, est clairement préféré (222); 19-20 permet de conclure que "la doctrine de la descente aux enfers n'a rien à voir avec 1 P 3,18-22" (228). Pour d'autres données, l'hésitation est perceptible. Dans l'expression du v. 18 "mort dans la chair, vivifié par l'Esprit", si le verbe "vivifier" est compris clairement comme visant la résurrection de Jésus, l'antithèse chair/esprit s'interprète plus difficilement, surtout la mention de l'esprit qui désignerait "le mode d'être de Jésus déterminé par l'Esprit, force vitale de Dieu, actif dans la résurrection" (213). Plus incertaine encore est l'analyse des esprits désobéissants autrefois, auprès desquels le Christ est allé faire une proclamation (19-20). La solution est formulée avec précaution: les esprits sont "probablement à comprendre" comme des esprits mauvais, des démons impurs (216). Curieusement, la perspective s'élargit ensuite: "on est porté à regrouper sous le terme 'esprits' les pécheurs impénitents que furent les contemporains de Noé et les être célestes qui furent les instiga-

teurs de la désobéissance des humains” (216). Devant cette nouvelle ambivalence et l’inconvénient de donner deux sens très distincts au même mot, s’ébauche un scrupule: “Le terme ‘esprits’ invite néanmoins à mettre l’accent principal sur ceux qui ne sont pas purement des humains”.

Les expressions énigmatiques de 4,1-6 rejoignent le thème majeur de l’épître: “celui qui a souffert dans la chair en a fini avec le péché” signifie que “le baptisé a bel et bien opéré une rupture déterminante et durable avec le péché” (236), et “l’annonce faite aux morts” est “la réhabilitation du juste par Dieu dans l’au-delà” (239).

Si, en 5,1-5, l’autoprésentation de Pierre constitue au départ “l’élément principal”, le terme rare “co-presbytre” suggère à la fois humilité et proximité. Dans la ligne de la thèse de la pseudépigraphie, le titre de “témoin” pour l’apôtre est compris comme une allusion vraisemblable à son martyre, modèle pour les éprouvés. Juger que la mention de Marc et de Silvain (5,12-13), compagnons de Paul selon ses épîtres et le livre des Actes, a pour effet probablement recherché de suggérer “l’unité entre Pierre et Paul donc l’unité du message apostolique” (300), introduisant en quelque sorte une dimension œcuménique, est faire porter beaucoup à deux mentions distinctes qui se veulent factuelles.

Quatre *excursus* sont proposés: “Le participe à valeur d’impératif” (93-94); “Le sacerdoce des baptisés” (141-142); “Les doxologies du NT” (253-254); “Le nom de chrétien, *christianos*” (274-275). On est surpris par leur brièveté et, disons-le, par la façon sommaire dont ils sont traités.

On dispose donc en français d’un commentaire largement informé qui offre, avec mesure (des opinions sont parfois mentionnées sans évaluation de la part de l’auteur), dans un style précis et même souvent élégant, une lecture de l’épître qui mérite toute l’attention. Le lecteur apprécie la relative concision de l’œuvre: elle fournit l’essentiel de ce qu’il souhaite connaître sans atteindre un volume trop astreignant — J.H. Elliott, *1 Peter. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 37B; New York 2000) (plus de 950 pages!). On peut, avec l’auteur, noter “les affinités existant entre la situation des chrétiens dans l’Asie Mineure du 1^{er} siècle et celle que vit la ‘fraternité’ à travers le monde (1 P 5,9)” (29).

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Michael WEIGL, *Die aramäische Achikar-Sprüche aus Elephantine und die alttestamentliche Weisheitsliteratur* (BZAW 399). Berlin – New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2010. xvi-880 p., 14 Abbildungen. 16 × 23.5. €139.95

In the century since the Aramaic Ahiqar (Achikar) was discovered at Elephantine, much scholarly attention has been devoted to this ancient work, often highlighting the importance of the proverbs as a window into the Near Eastern background of biblical wisdom traditions. Michael Weigl's book, the latest in this tradition, is the most extensive study ever written on the topic, a monograph of immense scope, erudition, and originality.

A brief summary hints at its breadth. An introductory chapter sketches the location of the Ahiqar traditions in world literature, the relationship of the narrative and the proverbs, Ahiqar in Tobit, the discovery of the Elephantine papyri, and an overview of previous scholarship, followed by a statement of Weigl's own goals and methodology.

Chapters 2-10 constitute the heart of the work. Here, Weigl proceeds column-by-column through the proverbs. Each chapter begins with an introductory section on the arrangement and literary affinities of the textual units in that column, pointing to groupings based on topic, keywords, syntax, and other stylistic features. This is followed by an analysis of each proverb in a three-fold pattern: (1) establishment of the text, (2) "inner texture," a closer analysis of compositional features, and (3) comparative analysis, embracing parallels in the Hebrew Bible, as well as ancient Near Eastern and post-biblical Jewish literature.

Two concluding chapters present an overview of literary style and form, including formulae, semantic fields and metaphors, and a summary of issues addressed and conclusions reached. Finally, there are comprehensive indices, a running version of the entire Aramaic text, and photographs of the papyrus, including the narrative, columns 1-5, which the book does not otherwise treat.

Weigl's most original contributions are found in the introductions to chapters 2-10 and the sections on "inner texture," in which he looks for unifying themes and compositional techniques in groups of sayings, examining a host of literary features.

Weigl treats the Aramaic text with care and precision, paleographically and philologically. He accepts the new arrangement of columns and the numbering of proverbs worked out by B. Porten and A. Yardeni (*Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt* [III, Winona Lake, IN 1993] 23-53). In disputed readings and proposed restorations, Weigl often follows Porten and Yardeni, though many readings are adopted from earlier scholars, and he offers a substantial number of original proposals. His evalua-

tions of predecessors, even where he disagrees, are judicious – sometimes debatable, but consistently well-reasoned and fairly presented. Despite occasional slips, as for instance, when he states incorrectly (35) that this reviewer proposed a new ordering of the columns, he provides a thorough compendium of the spectrum of scholarship. Translations are rather literal, but not excessively so.

The comparative analysis is thorough, competent, and appropriately critical, tracing motifs and turns of phrase through a wide repertoire of ancient Near Eastern and Jewish literatures. This has been done before, but Weigl does it with greater comprehensiveness and critical acumen than any before him.

The half-tone photographs are clear and on the whole legible, though not of exceptional resolution, and of considerably reduced size (approximately 22%–72% of full size). They are mostly from a series taken in 1981 for Porten and Yardeni, but not previously published. Column 12 and several additional fragments newly attributed to Ahiqar could not be re-photographed and are reproduced from the *editio princeps* (E. Sachau, *Aramäische Papyrus und Ostraca aus einer jüdischen Militärkolonie zu Elephantine* [Leipzig 1911]).

Weigl made extensive study of both the original papyri and the available photographs, but one should now consult in addition the high-resolution photographs available online from the West Semitic Research Project of the University of Southern California (for details, see <http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/wsrp/index.html>). Sachau's original photographs continue to be of value.

It has been observed that Porten and Yardeni's textual readings are often slightly more positive than the state of the original manuscript justifies, especially at the boundaries of lacunae (J. Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters* [Atlanta 2003] 10, 13–14, n. “d”). The same critique applies to Weigl, especially since he adopts many of their readings unchanged. To give a single example, in line 168b (#81), where Weigl reads דבא אזל על אמר[יא], a more conservative (and precise) reading would be דבא אזל על אמ[ריא].

Porten includes a brief excursus on structures and themes (*Textbook*, xv–xvi), but older studies generally treat the proverbs as a more or less disjointed collection. Against this tradition, Weigl makes a compelling case that there is far more coherence in the editorial arrangement of sayings than earlier scholars discerned, that the proverbs contain broad complexes of sayings linked by theme, keywords, and a variety of other compositional techniques. Furthermore, he suggests that in many sayings, allusions to the Ahiqar narrative can be discerned.

Weigl's acceptance of the Porten-Yardeni rearrangement entails abandoning a biblical parallel once rather widely accepted, the so-called proverb #13 (old enumeration) that appeared to depict Wisdom as a per-

son precious to the gods, and established in heaven by divine fiat, seen as a significant analogue to Prov 8, Job 28, and several similar passages in later Jewish literature. As re-divided, the two halves of this saying are found in quite different contexts, the first of which is designated proverb #1, in Weigl's translation:

“Auch für die Götter ist sie kostbar.

Ge[*meinsam mit ihrem Herrn ist ihr*] die Herrschaft.

In den Himmel ist sie gesetzt,

denn der Herr der Heiligen hat [*sie*] erhöht” (73).

This, for Weigl, serves as a hymnic introduction to the entire collection, probably alluding to wisdom, even in the absence of the explicit reference to חכמה that is now split off into proverb #97 (line 189b). Weigl is commendably cautious at this point. Comparing the relevant biblical passages, he allows that the referent is probably wisdom, but the fact that it is “placed” in heaven or “raised” by the lord of the holy ones, is not sufficient to indicate a full-blown personification (76), and furthermore that the temporal aspect, so strong in most of these passages, is lacking in the Ahiqar proverb (78).

A key concept for Weigl's analysis of editorial structure is “contextual modification,” the re-interpretation of an originally generic proverb by placing it within a group of sayings that lend it a more specific meaning. His arguments on this score are sometimes convincing and enlightening; see, e.g., his treatment of the fable of the bramble and the pomegranate (#23, lines 101-102 [226-236]). By placing it in a series dealing with ethical standards, the editor implies a reading centering on the clash between the evil-doer and the righteous, suggesting an ethical interpretation of proverb #23, and also allowing this saying, in turn, to color the surrounding sayings.

But a word of caution is in order. Contextual re-interpretation may sometimes be appropriate, but this can become an exceedingly slippery principle. The line between *discovering* thematic connections and *inventing* them can be very thin. At times, the reader is tempted to suspect that Weigl sees a higher degree of coherence within a block of sayings than is there, and that he may be massaging the text to support an elusive unity of sense.

Documenting this in detail would require far too much space, but a compressed summary of his analysis of proverbs ##1-17 (lines 79-94) may illustrate. Weigl takes this as a complex group of sayings on royalty and the proper behavior of the courtier. His analysis (61-72) is intricate, but involves interlocking groups of sayings: ##1 and 14-15 as bracketing hymnic fragments, ##2, 3-5 and 16 concerning responsible speech at the proper time, #6 introducing the language of kingship, followed by a small group of proverbs (##7-12) dealing with royal commands and the proper manner of speech in the presence of the king. #11 does not speak of royalty or appropriate speech, but Weigl suggests that the editor, by placing

this within a group of sayings concerning the king, has implicitly shifted its literal sense (the bitterness of poverty) to a metaphorical one hinting at improper behavior or intrigue at the royal court. #17 (line 94), a fragmentary fable about the lion and the ass, is unlike the others, but can be taken as illustrating the threatening character of the king (the lion) and the weakness of the courtier (the ass) (72).

When one reads proverbs ##1-17 closely with a more skeptical eye, however, without applying the unifying principle, what emerges is *not* a cluster of sayings on proper behavior within the orbit of kingship. Only about half of these proverbs have anything to do explicitly with a king or royal court.

The flexibility of this principle is especially problematic when it leads to conjectural restorations. The beginning point of Weigl's syntactic analysis of proverbs #8 and #9 (lines 85-88 [68]), for instance, is the fact that both sayings begin with the imperative חזי ("see!"). But חזי in #9 is entirely restored. There is no trace of the word on the papyrus, and as Weigl admits, several other restorations are equally possible (143-144). Or again, in proverb #5 (line 83), when analyzing a subtle pattern of repetition, it will not do to restore an entire word from context, as Weigl does (in this case, מלתך "your [word]"), and then to use the restored word as a significant component of the analysis (101-102).

More generally, the precision of Weigl's literary analyses is undercut by the fragmentary character of the manuscript. This is, after all, a text without a single intact line! Weigl reminds the reader repeatedly that there are limitations to what analysis can achieve, and that much remains hypothetical, but this reader nevertheless found himself wishing he would say "I don't know" far more frequently. Furthermore, the quest for literary precision runs the risk of eliminating the very ambiguity and purposefully imprecise meaning that give wisdom sayings their polyvalence.

Among the many unresolved issues in Ahiqar scholarship is the question of its geographical background (chapter 12). At the end of an intricate examination of probable redactional activity and affinities of language and style with older Aramaic inscriptions (particularly Tel Fekheriye) and neo-Assyrian letters (especially those of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal), Weigl concludes that the "Janus-like" character of the proverbs indicates they were assembled from more than one source, representing more than one linguistic and cultural tradition (688).

Weigl's Aramaic transcription is mercifully free from proofreading errors, though one should correct ילוטון to ילוטון in line 151 (#67) and רגלמם to רגלהם in line 170 (#81). In line 186a (#93), the first word (מובלה) should be placed partially in brackets as a conjectural restoration (cf. Weigl, 489, n. 164). There are several misplaced end-of-line markers (|): in lines 168a (#80), 184a (#92), 188a (#95), 189a (#96), and 192a (#99), all of which should be deleted. And in line 186a (#93), the end-of-line marker following יטעננהי should be changed to an asterisk, the end-of-saying marker.

In sum, Weigl's method is rigorous, and his assumptions are fundamentally sound. His questions are the right ones, even if he is at times overly positive in attempting to answer them. His conclusions must be evaluated at each point, but overall the book represents a huge step forward in the interpretation of this most difficult text.

This book should be in the library of every institution where Near Eastern or biblical studies are taught, and any serious student of wisdom literature or ancient Aramaic will need to study it closely. In treating an ancient text this difficult and ambiguous, one further marred by a defective manuscript tradition, a "definitive" edition will never be a possibility. But — as in the fable of Achilles and the tortoise — it is always possible to get closer than before. And this, Weigl has done admirably.

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